

PD STORIES BY WOMEN

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A GATHERER OF SIMPLES.

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A Far-Away Melody And Other Stories.

by Mary E. Wilkins

A DAMP air was blowing up, and the frogs were beginning to peep. The sun was setting in a low red sky. On both sides of the road were rich green meadows intersected by little canal-like brooks. Beyond the meadows on the west was a distant stretch of pine woods, that showed dark against the clear sky. Aurelia Flower was going along the road towards her home, with a great sheaf of leaves and flowers in her arms. There were the rosy spikes of hardback ; the great white corymbs of thoroughwort, and the long blue racemes of lobelia. Then there were great bunches of the odorous tansy and pennyroyal in with the rest.

Aurelia was a tall, strongly-built woman ; she was not much over thirty, but she looked older. Her complexion had a hard red tinge from exposure to sun and wind, and showed seams as unreservedly as granite. Her face was thin, and her cheek-bones high. She had a profusion of auburn hair, showing in a loose slipping coil beneath her limp black straw hat. Her dress, as a matter of fashion, was execrable ; in point of harmony with her immediate surroundings, very well, though she had not thought of it in that way. There was a green under-skirt, and a brown over-skirt and basque of an obsolete cut. She had worn it just so for a good many years, and never thought of altering it. It did not seem to occur to her that though her name was Flower, she was not really a flower in regard to apparel, and had not its right of unchangeableness in the spring. When the trees hung out their catkins, she flaunted her poor old greens and browns under them, rejoicing, and never dreamed but they looked all right. As far as dress went, Aurelia was a happy woman.

She went over the road to-night at a good pace, her armful of leaves and blossoms nodding ; her spare, muscular limbs bore her along easily. She had been over a good many miles since noon, but she never thought of being tired.

Presently she came in sight of her home, a square unpainted building, black with age. It stood a little back from the road on a gentle slope. There were three great maple* trees in front of the house ; their branches rustled against the roof. On the left was a small garden ; some tall poles thickly twined with hops were prominent in it.

Aurelia went round to the side door of the house with her armful of green things. The door opened directly into the great kitchen. One on entering would have started back as one would on seeing unexpected company in a room. The walls were as green as a lady's bower with bunches and festoons of all sorts of New England herbs. There they hung, their brave blossoms turning grey and black, giving out strange, half-pleasant, half-disgusting odours. Aurelia took them in like her native air. "It's good to get home," murmured she to herself, for there was no one else : she lived alone.

She took off her hat and disposed of her burden ; then she got herself some supper. She did not build a fire in the cooking-stove, for she never drank tea in warm weather. Instead, she had a tumbler of root-beer which she had made herself. She set it out on one end of her kitchen-table with a slice of coarse bread and a saucer of cold beans. She sat down to them and ate with a good appetite. She looked better with her hat off. Her forehead was an important part of her face ; it was white and womanly, and her reddish hair lay round it in pretty curves ; then her brown eyes, under very strongly arched brows, showed to better advantage. Taken by herself, and not compared with other women, Aurelia was not so bad looking ; but she never was taken by herself in

that way, and nobody had ever given her any credit for comeliness. It would have been like looking at a jack-in-the-pulpit and losing all the impression that had ever been made on one by roses and hyacinths, and seeing absolutely nothing else but its green and brown lines : it is doubtful if it could be done.

She had finished her supper, and was sorting her fresh herbs, when the door opened and a woman walked in. She had no bonnet on her head : she was a neighbour, and this was an unceremonious little country place.

" Good evenin , Relia," said she. There was an important look on her plain face, as if there were more to follow.

Good evenin , Mis Atwood. Take a chair."

" Been herbin again ? "

"Yes; I went out a little while this afternoon."

" Where d you go ? up on Green Mountain?"

"No; I went over to White s Woods, There were some kinds there I wanted."

" You don t say so ! That s a matter of six miles, ain t it ? Ain t you tired ? "

" Lor , no," said Aurelia. " I reckon I m pretty strong, or mebbe the smell of the herbs keeps me up ; " and she laughed.

So did the other. "Sure enough well, mebbe it does. I never thought of that. But it seems like a pretty long tramp to me, though my bein so fleshy may make a difference. I could have walked it easier once."

" I shouldn t wonder if it did make a

difference. I ain t got much flesh to carry round to tire me out."

" You re always pretty well, too, ain t you, Relia ? "

"Lor , yes ; I never knew what twas to be sick. How s your folks, Mis Atwood ? Is Viny any better than she was ? "

" I don t know as she is, much. She feels pretty poorly most of the time. I guess I ll hev you fix some more of that root-beer for her. I thought that seemed to liven her up a little."

" I ve got a jug of it all made, down cellar, and you can take it when you go home, if you want to."

" So I will, if you Ve got it. I was in hopes you might hev it."

The important look had not vanished from Mrs. Atwood s face, but she was not the woman to tell important news in a hurry, and have the gusto of it so soon over. She was one of the natures who always dispose of bread before pie. Now she came to it, however.

"I heard some news to-night, Relia," said she.

Aurelia picked out another spray of hardhack. " What was it ? "

Thomas Rankin s dead."

Aurelia clutched the hardback mechanically. "You don t mean it, Mis Atwood ! When did he die ? I hadn t heard he was sick."

" He wasn t long. Had a kind of a fit this noon, and died right off. The doctor they sent for Dr. Smith from Alden called it sunstroke. You know twas awful hot, and he d been out in the field to work all

the mornin . I think twas heart trouble ;
it s in the Rankin family ; his father died
of it. Doctors don t know everything."

"Well, it s a dreadful thing," said
Aurelia. " I can t realise % There he s
left four little children, and it ain t more n
a year since Mis Rankin died. It ain t a
year, is it ? "

"It ain t a year into a month and six
teen days," said Mrs. Atwood solemnly.
"Viny and I was countin of it up just
before I came in here."

" Well, I guess tisn t, come to think of
it. I couldn t have told exactly. The
oldest of those children ain t more than
eight, is she ? "

" Ethelind is eight, coming next month :
Viny and I was reckinin it up. Then
Edith is six, and Isadore is five, and Myrtie
ain t but two, poor little thing."

"What do you s pose will be done with
em?"

"I don t know. Viny an me was talk
ing of it over, and got it settled that her
sister Mis Loomis, over to Alden, would
hev to hev em. It ll be considerable for
her, too, for she s got two of her own, and
I don t s pose Sam Loomis has got much.
But I don t see what else can be done. Of
course strangers ain t goin to take children
when there is folks."

" Wouldn t his mother take em ? "

"What, old-lady Sears? Lor , no. You
Know she was dreadful put out bout
Thomas marryin where he did, and de
clared he shouldn t hev a cent of her money.
It was all her second husband s anyway.
John Rankin wasn t worth anything. She
won t do anything for em. She s livin in
great style down near the city, they say.
Got a nice house, and keeps help. She might

hev em jest as well as not, but she won t.
She s a hard woman to get along with, any
how. She nagged both her husbands to
death, an Thomas never had no peace at
home. Guess that was one reason why he
was in such a hurry to get married. Mis
Rankin was a good-tempered soul, if she
wasn t quite so drivin as some. "

"I do feel dreadfully to think of those
children," said Aurelia.

" Tis hard ; but we must try an believe
it will be ruled for the best. I s pose I
must go, for I left Viny all alone."

"Well, if you must, I ll get that root-
beer for you, Mis Atwood. I shall keep
thinking bout those children all night."

A week or two after that, Mrs. Atwood
had some more news ; but she didn t go to
Aurelia with it, for Aurelia was the very
sub-essence of it herself. She unfolded it
gingerly to her daughter Lavinia a pale,
peaked young woman, who looked as if it
would take more than Aurelia^ s root-beer to
make her robust. Aurelia had taken the
youngest Rankin child for her own, and
Mrs. Atwood had just heard of it. " It s
true," said she ; " I see her with it myself.
Old lady Sears never so much as sent a
letter, let alone not coming to the funeral,
and Mis Loomis was glad enough to get rid
of it."

Viny drank in the story as if it had been
so much nourishing jelly. Her too narrow
life was killing her as much as anything
else.

Meanwhile Aurelia had the child, and
was actively happy, for the first time in her
life, to her own naive astonishment, for she
had never known that she was not so before.
She had naturally strong affections, of an
outward rather than an inward tendency.
She was capable of much enjoyment from
pure living, but she had never had anything

of which to be so very fond. She could only remember her father as a gloomy, hard working man, who never noticed her much. He had a melancholy temperament, which resulted in a tragical end when Aurelia was a mere child. When she thought of him, the same horror which she had when they brought him home from the river crept over her now. They had never known certainly just how Martin Flower had come to die ; but folks never spoke of him to Aurelia and her mother, and the two never talked of him together. They knew that everybody said Martin Flower had drowned himself ; they felt shame and a Puritan shrinking from the sin.

Aurelia's mother had been a hard, silent woman before ; she grew more hard and silent afterwards. She worked hard, and taught Aurelia to. Their work was peculiar ; they hardly knew themselves how they had happened to drift into it ; it had seemed to creep in with other work, till finally it usurped it altogether. At first, after her husband's death, Mrs. Flower had tried millinery : she had learned the trade in her youth. But she made no headway now in sewing rosebuds and dainty bows on to bonnets ; it did not suit with tragedy. The bonnets seemed infected with her own mood ; the bows lay flat with stern resolve, and the rosebuds stood up fiercely ; she did not please her customers, even among those uncritical country folk, and they dropped off. She had always made excellent root-beer, and had had quite a reputation in the neighbourhood for it. How it happened she could not tell, but she found herself selling it ; then she made hop yeast, and sold that. Then she was a woman of fertile brain, and another project suggested itself to her.

She and Aurelia ransacked the woods thereabouts for medicinal herbs, and disposed of them to druggists in a neighbouring town. They had a garden also of some sorts the different mints, thyme, lavender, coriander, rosemary, and others. It was an

unusual business for two women to engage in, but it increased, and they prospered, according to their small ideas. But Mrs. Flower grew more and more bitter with success. What regrets and longing that her husband could have lived and shared it, and been spared his final agony, she had in her heart, nobody but the poor woman herself knew ; she never spoke of them. She died when Aurelia was twenty, and a woman far beyond her years. She mourned for her mother, but although she never knew it, her warmest love had not been called out. It had been hardly possible. Mrs. Flower had not been a lovable mother ; she had rarely spoken to Aurelia but with cold censure for the last few years. People whispered that it was a happy release for the poor girl when her mother died ; they had begun to think she was growing like her husband, and perhaps was not " just right."

Aurelia went on with the business with calm equanimity, and made even profits every year. They were small, but more than enough for her to live on, and she paid the last dollar of the mortgage which had so fretted her father, and owned the whole house clear. She led a peaceful, innocent life, with her green herbs for companions ; she associated little with the people around, except in a business way. They came to see her, but she rarely entered their houses. Every room in her house was festooned with herbs ; she knew every kind that grew in the New England woods, and hunted them out in their season and brought them home ; she was a simple, sweet soul, with none of the morbid melancholy of her parents about her. She loved her work, and the greenwood things were to her as friends, and the healing qualities of sarsaparilla and thoroughwort, and the sweetness of thyme and lavender, seemed to have entered into her nature, till she almost could talk with them in that way. She had never thought of being unhappy ; but now she wondered at herself over this child. It was a darling of a

child ; as dainty and winsome a girl baby as ever was. Her poor young mother had had a fondness for romantic names, which she had bestowed, as the only heritage within her power, on all her children. This one was Myrtilla Myrtie for short. The little thing clung to Aurelia from the first, and Aurelia found that she had an other way of loving besides the way in which she loved lavender and thorough-wort. The comfort she took with the child through the next winter was unspeakable. The herbs were banished from the south room, which was turned into a nursery, and a warm carpet was put on the floor, that the baby might not take cold. She learned to cook for the baby her own diet had been chiefly vegetarian. She became a charming nursing- mother. People wondered. "It does beat all how handy Relia is with that baby," Mrs. Atwood told Viny.

Aurelia took even more comfort with the little thing when spring came, and she could take her out with her; then she bought a little straw carriage, and the two went after herbs together. Home they would come in the tender spring twilight, the baby asleep in her carriage, with a great sheaf of flowers beside her, and Aurelia with another over her shoulder.

She felt all through that summer as if she were too happy to have it last. Once she said so to one of the neighbours. "I feel as if it wa n t right for me to be so perfectly happy," said she. " I feel some days as if I was walkin an walkin an walkin through a garden of sweet-smellin herbs, an nothin else ; an as for Myrtie, she s a bundle of myrtle an camphor out of King Solomon s garden. I m so afraid it can t last. "

Happiness had seemed to awake in Aurelia a taint of her father s foreboding melancholy. But she apparently had no reason for it until early fall. Then, returning with Myrtie one night from a trip to the woods, she found an old lady seated on her door-step, grimly

waiting for her. She was an old woman and tremulous, but still undaunted and unshaken as to her spirit. Her tall, shrunken form was loaded with silk and jet. She stood up as Aurelia approached, wondering, and her dim old eyes peered at her aggressively through fine gold spectacles, which lent an additional glare to them.

"I suppose you are Miss Flower ? " began the old lady, with no prefatory parley.

" Yes." said Aurelia, trembling.

"Well, my name s Mrs. Matthew Sears, an I ve come for my grandchild- there."

Aurelia turned very white. She let her hands slide to the ground. "I hardly understand I guess," faltered she. " Can t you let me keep her ? "

" Well, I guess I won t have one of my grandchildren brought up by an old yarb-woman not if I know it. "

The old lady sniffed. Aurelia stood looking at her. She felt as if she had fallen down from heaven, and the hard reality of the earth had jarred the voice out of her. Then the old lady made a step towards the carriage, and caught up Myrtie in her trembling arms. The child screamed with fright. She had been asleep. She turned her little frightened face towards Aurelia, and held out her arms, and cried, " Mamma ! mamma ! mamma ! " in a perfect frenzy of terror. The old lady tried in vain to hush her. Aurelia found her voice then. "You d better let me take her and give her her supper," she said, "and when she is asleep again I will bring her over to you."

"Well," said the old lady doubtfully. She was glad to get the frantic little thing out of her arms, though.

Aurelia held her close and hushed her, and she subsided into occasional convulsive

sobs, and furtive, frightened glances at her grandmother.

" I s pose you are stopping at the hotel ? " said Aurelia.

" Yes, I am," said the old lady stoutly.
"You kin bring her over as soon as she s asleep. " Then she marched off with uncer tain majesty.

Some women would have argued the case longer, but Aurelia felt that there was simply no use in it. The old lady was the child s grandmother : if she wanted her, she saw no way but to give her up. She never thought of pleading, she was so convinced of the old lady s determination.

She carried Myrtie into the house, gave her her supper, washed her, and dressed her in her little best dress. Then she took her up in her lap and tried to explain to her childish mind the change that was to be made in her life. She told her she was going to live with her grandmother, and she must be a good little girl, and love her, and do just as she told her to. Myrtie sobbed with unreasoning grief, and clung to Aurelia ; but she wholly failed to take in the full meaning of it all.

She was still fretful, and bewildered by her rude wakening from her nap. Presently she fell asleep again, and Aurelia laid her . down while she got together her little ward robe. There was a hop pillow in a little linen case, on which Myrtie had always slept ; she packed that up with the other things.

Then she rolled up the little sleeping girl in a blanket, laid her in her carriage, and went over to the hotel. It was not much of a hotel merely an ordinary two-story house, where two or three spare rooms were ample accommodation for the few straggling guests who came to this little rural place. It was only a few steps from Aurelia s house. The

old lady had the chamber of honour a large square room on the first floor, opening directly on to the piazza. In spite of all Aurelia's care, Myrtie woke up and began to cry when she was carried in. She had to go off and leave her screaming piteously after her. Out on the piazza she uttered the first complaint, almost, of her life to the hostess, Mrs. Simonds, who had followed her there.

"Don't feel bad, Relia," said the woman, who was almost crying herself. "I know it's awful hard, when you was taking so much comfort. We all feel for you."

Aurelia looked straight ahead. She had the bundle of little clothes and the hop pillow in her arms; the old lady had said, in a way that would have been funny if it had not been for the poor heart that listened, that she didn't want any yarb pillows, nor any clothes scented with yarbs nuther.

"I don't mean to be wicked," said Aurelia, "but I can't help thinking that Providence ought to provide for women. I wish Myrtie was mine."

The other woman wiped her eyes at the hungry way in which she said "mine."

"Well, I can't do anything; but I'm scrry for you, if that's all. You'd make enough sight better mother for Myrtie than that cross old woman. I don't believe she more'n half wants her, only she's sot. She doesn't care anything about having the other children; she's going to leave them with Mis Loomis; but she says her grandchildren ain't going to be living with strangers, an she ought to hev been consulted. After all you've done for the child, to treat you as she has to-night, she's the most ungrateful I know one thing; I'd charge her for Myrtie's board a good price, too."

"Oh, I don't want anything of that sort," said poor Aurelia dejectedly, listening to-

her darling s sobs. " You go in an try to hush her, Mis Simonds. Oh P*

"So I will. Her grandmother can t do anything with her, poor little thing ! I ve got some peppermints. I do believe she s spankin her the "

Aurelia did not run in with Mrs. Simonds ; she listened outside till the pitiful cries hushed a little ; then she went desolately home.

She sat down in the kitchen, with the little clothes in her lap. She did not think of going to bed ; she did not cry nor moan to herself ; she just sat there still. It was not very late when she came home between eight and nine. In about half an hour, perhaps, she heard a sound outside that made her heart leap a little voice crying pitifully, and saying, between the sobs, " Mamma ! mamma ! "

Aurelia made one spring to the door. There was the tiny creature in her little nightgown, shaking all over with cold and sobs.

Aurelia caught her up, and all her calm was over. " you darling ! you darling ! you darling ! " she cried, covering her little cold body all over with kisses. " You sha n t leave me you sha n t ! you sha n t J Little sweetheart all I ve got in the world. I guess they sha n t take you away when you don t want to go. Did you cry, and mamma go off and leave you ? Did they whip you ? They never shall again never ! never ! There, there, blessed, don t cry ; mamma ll get you all warm, and you shall go to sleep on your own little pillow. O you darling ! darling ! darling ! "

Aurelia busied herself about the child, rubbing the little numb limbs, and getting some milk heated. She never asked how she came to get away ; she never thought of anything except that she had her. She

stopped every other minute to kiss her and croon to her ; she laughed and cried. Now she gave way to her feelings ; she was almost beside herself. She had the child all warm and fed and comforted by the kitchen fire when she heard steps outside, and she knew at once what was coming, and a fierce resolve sprang up in her heart : they should not have that child again to-night. She cast a hurried glance around ; there was hardly a second's time. In the corner of the kitchen was a great heap of herbs which she had taken down from the walls where they had been drying ; the next day she had intended to pack them and send them off. She caught up Myrtle and covered her with them. "Lie still, darling!" she whispered. "Don't make a bit of noise, or your grandmother will get you again." Myrtle crouched under them, trembling.

Then the door opened ; Mr. Simonds stood there with a lantern. "That little girl's run away," he began "slipped out while the old lady was out of the room a minute. Beats all how such a little thing knew enough. She's here, ain't she ? "

"No," said Aurelia, "she ain't."

"You don't mean it ? "

"Yes."

"Ain't you seen her, though ? "

"No."

Mr. Simonds, who was fat and placid, began to look grave. "Then, all there is about it, we've got to have a hunt," said he. "Twon't do to have that little tot out in her nightgown long. We hadn't a thought but that she was here. Must have lost her way. "

Aurelia watched him stride down the yard. Then she ran after him. "Mr. Simonds ! " He turned. "I told you a lie.

Myrtie s in the corner of the kitchen under a heap of herbs."

"Why, what on earth "

"I wanted to keep her so to-night. Aurelia burst right out in loud sobs.

" There, Relia ! It s a confounded shame. You shall keep her. I ll make it all right with the old lady somehow. I reckon, as long as the child s safe, she ll be glad to get rid of her to-night. She wouldn t have slept much. Go right into the house, Relia, and don t worry."

Aurelia obeyed. She hung over the little creature, asleep in her crib, all night. She watched her every breath. She never thought of sleeping herself her last night with Myrtie. The seconds were so many grains of gold-dust. Her heart failed her when day broke. She washed and dressed Myrtie at the usual time, and gave her her breakfast. Then she sat down with her and waited. The child s sorrow was soon forgotten, and she played about as usual. Aurelia watched her despairingly. She began to wonder at length why they did not come for her. It grew later and later. She would not carry her back herself, she was resolved on that.

It was ten o clock before any one came ; then it was Mrs. Simonds. She had a atrange look on her face.

" Relia," she said, standing in the door and looking at her and Myrtle, " you ain t heard what has happened to our house this mornin , hev you ? "

No, " said Aurelia, awed.

" Old Mis Sears is dead. Had her third shock : she s had two in the last three years. She was took soon after Mr. Simonds got home. We got a doctor right off, but she died bout an hour ago."

" Oh," said Aurelia ; "I ve been a wicked woman. "

" No you ain t, Aurelia ; don t you go tc feeling so. There s no call for the living to be unjust to themselves because folks are dead. You did the best you could. An now you re glad you can keep the child ; you can t help it. I thought of it myself the first thing."

"Oh, I was such a wicked woman to think of it myself," said Aurelia. " If I could only have done something for the poor old soul ! Why didn t you call me ? "

"I told Mr. Simonds I wouldn t; you d had enough."

There was one thing, however, which Aurelia found to do a simple and touching thing, though it probably meant more to her than to most of those who knew of it.

On the day of the funeral the poor old woman s grave was found lined with fragrant herbs from Aurelia s garden thyme and lavender and rosemary. She had cried when she picked them, because she could not help being glad, and they were all she could give for atonement.

MAYMEYS FROM CUBA

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Buttered Side Down*, by Edna Ferber

There is nothing new in this. It has all been done before. But tell me, what is new? Does the aspiring and perspiring summer vaudeville artist flatter himself that his stuff is going big? Then does the stout man with the oyster-colored eyelids in the first row, left, turn his bullet head on his fat-creased neck to remark huskily to his companion:

"The hook for him. R-r-r-rotten! That last one was an old Weber'n Fields' gag. They discarded it back in '91. Say, the good ones is all dead, anyhow. Take old Salvini, now, and Dan Rice. Them was actors. Come on out and have something."

Does the short-story writer felicitate himself upon having discovered a rare species in humanity's garden? The Blase Reader flips the pages between his fingers, yawns, stretches, and remarks to his wife:

"That's a clean lift from Kipling--or is it Conan Doyle? Anyway, I've read something just like it before. Say, kid, guess what these magazine guys get for a full page ad.? Nix. That's just like a woman. Three thousand straight. Fact."

To anticipate the delver into the past it may be stated that the plot of this one originally appeared in the Eternal Best Seller, under the heading, "He Asked You For Bread, and Ye Gave Him a Stone." There may be those who could not have traced my plagiarism to its source.

Although the Book has had an unprecedentedly long run it is said to be less widely read than of yore.

Even with this preparation I hesitate to confess that this is the story of a hungry girl in a big city. Well, now, wait a minute. Conceding that it has been done by every scribbler from tyro to best seller expert, you will acknowledge that there is the possibility of a fresh viewpoint--twist--what is it the sporting editors call it? Oh, yes--slant. There is the possibility of getting a new slant on an old idea. That may serve to deflect the line of the deadly parallel.

Just off State Street there is a fruiterer and importer who ought to be arrested for cruelty. His window is the most fascinating and the most heartless in Chicago. A line of open-mouthed, wide-eyed gazers is always to be found before it. Despair, wonder, envy, and rebellion smolder in the eyes of those gazers. No shop window show should be so diabolically set forth as to arouse such sensations in the breast of the beholder. It is a work of art, that window; a breeder of anarchism, a destroyer of contentment, a second feast of Tantalus. It boasts peaches, dewy and golden, when peaches have no right to be; plethoric, purple bunches of English hothouse grapes are there to taunt the ten-dollar-a-week clerk whose sick wife should be in the hospital; strawberries glow therein when shortcake is a last summer's memory, and forced cucumbers remind us that we are taking ours in the form of dill pickles. There is, perhaps, a choice head of cauliflower, so exquisite in its ivory and green perfection as to be fit for a bride's bouquet; there are apples so flawless that if the garden of Eden grew any as perfect it is small wonder that Eve fell for them.

There are fresh mushrooms, and jumbo cocoanuts, and green almonds; costly things in beds of cotton nestle next to strange and marvelous things in tissue, wrappings. Oh, that window is no place for the hungry, the dissatisfied, or the man out of a job. When the air is filled with snow there is that in the sight of muskmelons which incites crime.

Queerly enough, the gazers before that window foot up the same, year in, and year out, something after this fashion:

Item: One anemic little milliner's apprentice in coat and shoes that even her hat can't redeem.

Item: One sandy-haired, gritty-complexioned man, with a drooping ragged mustache, a tin dinner bucket, and lime on his boots.

Item: One thin mail carrier with an empty mail sack, gaunt cheeks, and an habitual droop to his left shoulder.

Item: One errand boy troubled with a chronic snuffle, a shrill and piping whistle, and a great deal of shuffling foot-work.

Item: One negro wearing a spotted tan topcoat, frayed trousers and no collar. His eyes seem all whites as he gazes.

Enough of the window. But bear it in mind while we turn to Jennie. Jennie's real name was Janet, and she was Scotch. Canny? Not necessarily, or why should she have been hungry and out of a job in January?

Jennie stood in the row before the window, and stared. The longer she stared the sharper grew the lines that fright and under-feeding had chiseled about her nose, and mouth, and eyes. When your last meal is an eighteen-hour-old memory, and when that memory has only near-coffee and a roll to dwell on, there is something in the sight of January peaches and great strawberries carelessly spilling out of a tipped box, just like they do in the fruit picture on the dining-room wall, that is apt to carve sharp lines in the corners of the face.

The tragic line dwindled, going about its business. The man with the dinner pail and the lime on his boots spat, drew the back of his hand across his mouth, and turned away with an ugly look. (Pork was up to \$14.25, dressed.)

The errand boy's blithe whistle died down to a mournful dirge.

He was window-wishing. His choice wavered between the juicy pears, and the foreign-looking red things that looked like oranges, and weren't. One hand went into his coat pocket, extracting an apple that was to have formed the piece de resistance of his noonday lunch. Now he regarded it with a sort of pitying disgust, and bit into it with the middle-of-the-morning contempt that it deserved.

The mail carrier pushed back his cap and reflectively scratched his head. How much over his month's wage would that green basket piled high with

exotic fruit come to?

Jennie stood and stared after they had left, and another line had formed. If you could have followed her gaze with dotted lines, as they do in the cartoons, you would have seen that it was not the peaches, or the prickly pears, or the strawberries, or the muskmelon or even the grapes, that held her eye. In the center of that wonderful window was an oddly woven basket. In the basket were brown things that looked like sweet potatoes. One knew that they were not. A sign over the basket informed the puzzled gazer that these were maymeys from Cuba.

Maymeys from Cuba. The humor of it might have struck Jennie if she had not been so Scotch, and so hungry. As it was, a slow, sullen, heavy Scotch wrath rose in her breast. Maymeys from Cuba.

The wantonness of it! Peaches? Yes. Grapes, even, and pears and cherries in snow time. But maymeys from Cuba--why, one did not even know if they were to be eaten with butter, or with vinegar, or in the hand, like an apple. Who wanted maymeys from Cuba? They had gone all those hundreds of miles to get a fruit or vegetable thing--a thing so luxurious, so out of all reason that one did not know whether it was to be baked, or eaten raw. There they lay, in their foreign-looking basket, taunting Jennie who needed a quarter.

Have I told you how Jennie happened to be hungry and jobless? Well, then I sha'n't. It doesn't really matter, anyway. The fact is enough. If you really demand to know you might inquire of Mr. Felix Klein. You will find him in a mahogany office on the sixth floor. The door is marked manager. It was his idea to import Scotch lassies from Dunfermline for his Scotch linen department. The idea was more fetching than feasible.

There are people who will tell you that no girl possessing a grain of common sense and a little nerve need go hungry, no matter how great the city. Don't you believe them. The city has heard the cry of wolf so often that it refuses to listen when he is snarling at the door, particularly when the door is next door.

Where did we leave Jennie? Still standing on the sidewalk before the fruit and fancy goods shop, gazing at the maymeys from Cuba. Finally her Scotch bump of curiosity could stand it no longer. She dug her elbow into the arm of the person standing next in line.

"What are those?" she asked.

The next in line happened to be a man. He was a man without an overcoat, and with his chin sunk deep into his collar, and his hands thrust deep into his pockets. It looked as though he were trying to crawl inside himself for warmth.

"Those? That sign says they're maymeys from Cuba."

"I know," persisted Jennie, "but what are they?"

"Search me. Say, I ain't bothering about maymeys from Cuba. A couple of hot murphies from Ireland, served with a lump of butter, would look good enough to me."

"Do you suppose any one buys them?" marveled Jennie.

"Surest thing you know. Some rich dame coming by here, wondering what she can have for dinner to tempt the jaded palates of her dear ones, see? She sees them Cuban maymeys. 'The very thing!' she says. 'I'll have 'em served just before the salad.' And she sails in and buys a pound or two. I wonder, now, do you eat 'em with a fruit knife, or with a spoon?"

Jennie took one last look at the woven basket with its foreign contents. Then she moved on, slowly. She had been moving on for hours--weeks.

Most people have acquired the habit of eating three meals a day. In a city of some few millions the habit has made necessary the establishing of many thousands of eating places. Jennie would have told you that there were billions of these. To her the world seemed composed of one huge, glittering restaurant, with myriads of windows through which one caught maddening glimpses of ketchup bottles, and nickel coffee heaters, and piles of doughnuts, and scurrying waiters in white, and people critically studying menu cards. She walked in a maze of restaurants, cafes, eating-houses. Tables and diners loomed up at every turn, on every street, from Michigan Avenue's rose-shaded Louis the Somethingth palaces, where every waiter owns his man, to the white tile mausoleums where every man is his own waiter. Everywhere there were windows full of lemon cream pies, and pans of baked apples swimming in lakes of golden syrup, and pots of baked beans with the pink and crispy slices of pork just breaking through the crust. Every dairy lunch mocked one with the sign of "wheat cakes with maple syrup and country sausage, 20 cents."

There are those who will say that for cases like Jennie's there are soup kitchens, Y. W. C. A.'s, relief associations, policemen, and things like that. And so there are. Unfortunately, the people who need them aren't up on them. Try it. Plant yourself, penniless, in the middle of State Street on a busy day, dive into the howling, scrambling, pushing maelstrom that hurls itself against the mountainous and impregnable form of the crossing policeman, and see what you'll get out of it, provided you have the courage.

Desperation gave Jennie a false courage. On the strength of it she made two false starts. The third time she reached the arm of the crossing policeman, and clutched it. That imposing giant removed the whistle from

his mouth, and majestically inclined his head without turning his gaze upon Jennie, one eye being fixed on a red automobile that was showing signs of sulking at its enforced pause, the other being busy with a cursing drayman who was having an argument with his off horse.

Jennie mumbled her question.

Said the crossing policeman:

"Getcher car on Wabash, ride to 'umpty-second, transfer, get off at Blank Street, and walk three blocks south."

Then he put the whistle back in his mouth, blew two shrill blasts, and the horde of men, women, motors, drays, trucks, cars, and horses swept over him, through him, past him, leaving him miraculously untouched.

Jennie landed on the opposite curbing, breathing hard. What was that street? Umpty-what? Well, it didn't matter, anyway. She hadn't the nickel for car fare.

What did you do next? You begged from people on the street. Jennie selected a middle-aged, prosperous, motherly looking woman. She framed her plea with stiff lips. Before she had finished her sentence she found herself addressing empty air. The middle-aged, prosperous, motherly looking woman had hurried on.

Well, then you tried a man. You had to be careful there. He mustn't be the wrong kind. There were so many wrong kinds. Just an ordinary looking family man would be best. Ordinary looking family men are strangely in the minority. There are so many more bull-necked, tan-shoed ones. Finally Jennie's eye, grown sharp with want, saw one. Not too well dressed, kind-faced, middle-aged.

She fell into step beside him.

"Please, can you help me out with a shilling?"

Jennie's nose was red, and her eyes watery. Said the middle-aged family man with the kindly face:

"Beat it. You've had about enough I guess."

Jennie walked into a department store, picked out the oldest and most stationary looking floorwalker, and put it to him. The floorwalker bent his head, caught the word "food," swung about, and pointed over Jennie's head.

"Grocery department on the seventh floor. Take one of those elevators up."

Any one but a floorwalker could have seen the misery in Jennie's face. But to floorwalkers all women's faces are horrible.

Jennie turned and walked blindly toward the elevators. There was no fight left in her. If the floorwalker had said, "Silk negligees on the fourth floor. Take one of those elevators up," Jennie would have ridden up to the fourth floor, and stupidly gazed at pink silk and val lace negligees in glass cases.

Tell me, have you ever visited the grocery department of a great store on the wrong side of State Street? It's a mouth-watering experience. A department store grocery is a glorified mixture of delicatessen shop, meat market, and vaudeville. Starting with the live lobsters and crabs you work your hungry way right around past the cheeses, and the sausages, and the hams, and tongues, and head-cheese, past the blonde person in white who makes marvelous and uneatable things out of gelatine, through a thousand smells and scents--smells of things smoked, and pickled, and spiced, and baked and preserved, and roasted.

Jennie stepped out of the elevator, licking her lips. She sniffed the air, eagerly, as a hound sniffs the scent. She shut her eyes when she passed the sugar-cured hams. A woman was buying a slice from one, and the butcher was extolling its merits. Jennie caught the words "juicy" and "corn-fed."

That particular store prides itself on its cheese department. It boasts that there one can get anything in cheese from the simple cottage variety to imposing mottled Stilton. There are cheeses from France, cheeses from Switzerland, cheeses from Holland. Brick and parmesan, Edam and limburgier perfumed the atmosphere.

Behind the counters were big, full-fed men in white aprons, and coats. They flourished keen bright knives. As Jennie gazed, one of them, in a moment of idleness, cut a tiny wedge from a rich yellow Swiss cheese and stood nibbling it absently, his eyes wandering toward the blonde gelatine demonstrator. Jennie swayed, and caught the counter. She felt horribly faint and queer. She shut her eyes for a moment. When she opened them a woman--a fat, housewifely, comfortable looking woman--was standing before the cheese counter. She spoke to the cheese man. Once more his sharp knife descended and he was offering the possible customer a sample. She picked it off the knife's sharp tip, nibbled thoughtfully, shook her head, and passed on. A great, glorious world of hope opened out before Jennie.

Her cheeks grew hot, and her eyes felt dry and bright as she approached the cheese counter.

"A bit of that," she said, pointing. "It doesn't look just as I like it."

"Very fine, madam," the man assured her, and turned the knife point toward her, with the infinitesimal wedge of cheese reposing on its blade. Jennie tried to keep her hand steady as she delicately picked it off, nibbled as she had seen that other woman do it, her head on one side, before it shook a slow negative. The effort necessary to keep from cramming the entire piece into her mouth at once left her weak and trembling. She passed on as the other woman had done, around the corner, and into a world of sausages. Great rosy mounds of them filled counters and cases. Sausage! Sneer, you pate de foies grasers! But may you know the day when hunger will have you. And on that day may you run into linked temptation in the form of Braunschweiger Metwurst. May you know the longing that causes the eyes to glaze at the sight of Thuringer sausage, and the mouth to water at the scent of Cervelat wurst, and the fingers to tremble at the nearness of smoked liver.

Jennie stumbled on, through the smells and the sights. That nibble of cheese had been like a drop of human blood to a man-eating tiger. It made her bold, cunning, even while it maddened. She stopped at this counter and demanded a slice of summer sausage. It was paper-thin, but delicious beyond belief. At the next counter there was corned beef, streaked fat and lean. Jennie longed to bury her teeth in the succulent meat and get one great, soul-satisfying mouthful. She had to be content with her judicious nibbling. To pass the golden-brown, breaded pig's feet was torture. To look at the codfish balls was agony. And so Jennie went on, sampling, tasting, the scraps of food acting only as an aggravation. Up one aisle, and down the next she went. And then, just around the corner, she brought up before the grocery department's pride and boast, the Scotch bakery. It is the store's star vaudeville feature. All day long the gaping crowd stands before it, watching David the Scone Man, as with sleeves rolled high above his big arms, he kneads, and slaps, and molds, and thumps and shapes the dough into toothsome Scotch confections. There was a crowd around the white counters now, and the flat baking surface of the gas stove was just hot enough, and David the Scone Man (he called them Scuns) was whipping about here and there, turning the baking oat cakes, filling the shelf above the stove when they were done to a turn, rolling out fresh ones, waiting on customers. His nut-cracker face almost allowed itself a pleased expression--but not quite. David, the Scone Man, was Scotch (I was going to add, d'ye ken, but I will not).

Jennie wondered if she really saw those things. Mutton pies! Scones! Scotch short bread! Oat cakes! She edged closer, wriggling her way through the little crowd until she stood at the counter's edge. David, the Scone Man, his back to the crowd, was turning the last batch of oat cakes. Jennie felt strangely light-headed, and unsteady, and airy. She stared straight ahead, a half-smile on her lips, while a hand that she knew was her own, and that yet seemed no part of her, stole out, very, very slowly, and cunningly, and extracted a hot scone from the pile that

lay in the tray on the counter. That hand began to steal back, more quickly now. But not quickly enough. Another hand grasped her wrist. A woman's high, shrill voice (why will women do these things to each other?) said, excitedly:

"Say, Scone Man! Scone Man! This girl is stealing something!"

A buzz of exclamations from the crowd--a closing in upon her--a whirl of faces, and counter, and trays, and gas stove. Jennie dropped with a crash, the warm scone still grasped in her fingers.

Just before the ambulance came it was the blonde lady of the impossible gelatines who caught the murmur that came from Jennie's white lips. The blonde lady bent her head closer. Closer still. When she raised her face to those other faces crowded near, her eyes were round with surprise.

"S far's I can make out, she says her name's Mamie, and she's from Cuba. Well, wouldn't that eat you! I always thought they was dark complected."

POWER AND HORSE-POWER

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Just Around the Corner*, by Fannie Hurst

In the Knockerbeck Hotel there are various parlors; Pompeian rooms lined in marble and pillared in chaste fluted columns; Louis Quinze corners, gold-leafed and pink-brocaded, principally furnished with a spindly-legged Vernis-Martin cabinet and a large French clock in the form of a celestial sphere surmounted by a gold cupid.

There are high-ceilinged rendezvous rooms, with six arm and two straight chairs chased after the manner of Gouthière, and a series of small inlaid writing-desks, generously equipped for an avidious public to whom the crest-embossed stationery of a four-dollar-a-day-up hotel suggests long-forgotten friends back home.

Just off the lobby is the Oriental room, thick with arabesque hangings and incense and distinguished by the famous pair of Chinese famille rose mandarin jars, fifty-three inches high and enameled with Hoho birds and flowers. In careful contrast the adjoining room, a Colonial parlor paneled in black walnut and designed by a notorious architect, is ten degrees lower in temperature and lighted by large rectangular windows, through whose leaded panes a checkered patch of sunshine filters across the floor for half an hour each forenoon.

Then there is the manicure parlor, done in white tile, and stationary wash-stands by the Herman Casky Hygienic Company, Eighth Avenue.

The oracle of this particular Delphi was Miss Gertrude Sprunt, white-shirtwaisted, smooth-haired, and cool-fingered. Miss Sprunt could tell, almost as soon as you stepped out of the elevator opposite the parlors, the shortest cut to your hand and heart; she could glance at a pair of cuffs and give the finger-nails a correspondingly high or domestic finish, and could cater to the manicurial whims of Fifth Avenue and Four Corners alike. After one digital treat at her clever hands you enlisted as one of Miss Sprunt's regulars.

This fact was not lost upon her sister worker, Miss Ethyl Mooney. "Say, Gertie"--Miss Mooney tied a perky little apron about her trim waist and patted a bow into place--"is there ever a mornin' that you ain't booked clear through the day?"

Miss Sprunt hung her flat sailor hat and blue jacket behind the door, placed her hands on her hips, glanced down the length of her svelte figure, yawned, and patted her mouth with her hand.

"Not so you could notice it," she replied, in gapey tones. "I'm booked from nine to quitting just six days of the week; and, believe me, it's not like taking the rest cure."

"I guess if I was a jollier like you, Gert, I'd have a waitin'-list, too, I wish I could get on to your system."

"Maybe I give tradin'-stamps," observed Miss Sprunt, flippantly.

"You give 'em some sort of laughing-gas; but me, I'm of a retiring disposition, and I never could force myself on nobody."

Miss Gertrude flicked at herself with a whisk-broom.

"Don't feel bad about it, Ethyl; just keep on trying."

Miss Ethyl flushed angrily.

"Smarty!" she said.

"I wasn't trying to be nasty, Ethyl--you're welcome to an appointment every twenty minutes so far as I'm concerned."

Miss Ethyl appeared appeased.

"You know yourself, Gert, you gotta way about you. A dollar tip ain't nothin' for you. But look at me--I've forgot there's anything bigger'n a quarter in circulation."

"There's a great deal in knowing human nature. Why, I can almost tell a fellow's first name by looking at his half-moons."

"Believe me, Gert, it ain't your glossy finish that makes the hit; it's a way you've got of making a fellow think he's the whole show."

"I _do_ try to make myself agreeable," admitted Miss Sprunt.

"Agreeable! You can look at a guy with that Oh-I-could-just-listen-to-you-talk-for-ever expression, and by the time you're through with him he'll want to take his tens out of the water and sign over his insurance to you."

"Manicuring is a business like anything else," said Miss Sprunt, by no means displeased. "You sure do have to cater to the trade."

"Well, believe me--" began Miss Ethyl.

But Miss Gertrude suddenly straightened, smiled, and turned toward her table.

Across the hall Mr. James Barker, the rubbed-down, clean-shaven result of a Russian bath, a Swedish massage, and a bountiful American breakfast, stepped out of a French-gold elevator and entered the parlor.

Miss Sprunt placed the backs of her hands on her hips and cocked her head at the clock.

"Good morning, Mr. Barker; you're on time to the minute."

Mr. Barker removed his black-and-white checked cap, deposited three morning editions of evening papers atop a small glass case devoted to the display of Madame Dupont's beautifying cold-creams and marvelous cocoa-butters, and rubbed his hands swiftly together as if generating a spark. A large diamond mounted in a cruelly stretched lion's mouth glinted on Mr. Barker's left hand; a sister stone glowed like an acetylene lamp from his scarf.

"On time, eh! Leave it to your Uncle Fuller to be on time for the big show--a pretty goil can drag me from the hay quicker'n anything I know of."

Miss Gertrude quirked the corner of one eye at Miss Ethyl in a scarcely perceptible wink and filled a glass bowl with warm water.

"That's one thing I will say for my regular customers--they never keep me waiting; that is the beauty of having a high-class trade."

She glanced at Mr. Barker with pleasing insinuation, and they seated themselves _vis-à-vis_ at the little table.

Miss Sprunt surrounded herself with the implements of her craft--small porcelain jars of pink and white cold-creams, cakes of powder in varying degrees of pinkness, vials of opaque liquids, graduated series of files and scissors, large and small chamois-covered buffers, and last the round glass bowl of tepid water cloudy with melting soap.

Mr. Barker extended his large hand upon the little cushion and sighed in satisfaction.

"Go to it, sis--gimme a shine like a wind-shield."

She rested his four heavy fingers lightly in her palm.

"You really don't need a manicure, Mr. Barker; your hands keep the shine better than most."

"Well, I'll be hanged--tryin' to learn your Uncle Fuller when to have his own hands polished! Can you beat it?" Mr. Barker's steel-blue shaved face widened to a broad grin. "Say, you're a goil after my own heart--a regular little sixty-horse-power queen."

"I wasn't born yesterday, Mr. Barker."

"I know you wasn't, but you can't bluff me off, kiddo. You don't need to give me no high-power shine if you don't want to, but I've got one dollar and forty minutes' worth of your time cornered, just the samey."

Miss Sprunt dipped his hands into tepid water.

"I knew what I said would not frighten you off, Mr. Barker. I wouldn't have said it if I thought it would."

Mr. Barker guffawed with gusto.

"Can you beat the wimmin?" he cried. "Can you beat the wimmin?"

"You want a high pink finish, don't you, Mr. Barker?"

"Go as far as you like, sis; give 'em to me as pink and shiny as a baby's heel."

Miss Sprunt gouged out a finger-tip of pink cream and applied it lightly to the several members of his right hand. Her touch was sure and swift.

He regarded her with frankly admiring eyes.

"You're some little goil," he said; "you can tell me what I want better than I know myself."

"That's easy; there isn't a broker in New York who doesn't want a high pink finish, and I've been doing brokers, actors, millionaires, bank clerks, and Sixth Avenue swells in this hotel for three years."

He laughed delightedly, his eyes almost disappearing behind a fretwork of fine wrinkles.

"What makes you know I'm a tape-puller, kiddo? Durned if you ain't got my number better than I got it myself."

"I can tell a broker from a business man as easy as I can tell a five-carat diamond from a gilt-edge bond."

He slid farther down on his chair and regarded her with genuine approval.

"Say, kiddo, I've been all round the world--took a trip through Egypt in my car last spring that I could write a book about; but I ain't seen nothin' in the way of skirts that could touch you with a ten-foot rod."

She flushed.

"Oh, you fellows are such jolliers!"

"On the level, kiddo, you're preferred stock all right, and I'd be willin' to take a flyer any time."

"Say, Mr. Barker, you'd better quit stirring the candy, or it will turn to sugar."

"Lemme tell you, Miss Gertie, I ain't guyin', and I'll prove it to you. I'm goin' to take you out in the swellest little ninety-horse-power speedwagon you ever seen; if you'll gimme leave I'll set you and me up to-night to the niftiest little dinner-party on the island, eh?"

She filed rapidly at his thumb, bringing the nail to a pointed apex.

"I'm very careful about accepting invitations, Mr. Barker."

"Don't you think I can tell a genteel goil when I see her? That's why I ain't asked you out the first time I seen you."

She kept her eyes lowered.

"Of course, since you put it that way, I'll be pleased to accept your invitation, Mr. Barker."

He struck the table with his free hand.

"You're a live un, all right. How about callin' round fer you at six this evenin'?"

She nodded assent.

"Good goil! We'll keep the speedometer busy, all right!"

She skidded the palms of her hands over his nails. "There," she said, "that's not a bad shine."

He straightened his hands out before him and regarded them in mock scrutiny. "Those are some classy grabbers," he said; "and you're some classy little woiker."

He watched her replace the crystal stoppers in their several bottles and fit her various commodities into place. She ranged the scissors and files in neat graduated rows and blew powder particles off the cover with prettily pursed lips.

"That'll be about all, Mr. Barker."

He ambled reluctantly out from his chair.

"You'll be here at six, then?"

"Will I be here at six, sis? Say, will a fish swim?"

He fitted his cap carefully upon his head and pulled the vizor low over his eyes.

"So long, kiddo!" He crossed the marble corridor, stepped into the gold elevator, the filigree door snapped shut, and he shot upward.

Miss Ethyl waited a moment and then pitched her voice to a careful note of indifference.

"I'll bet the million-dollar kid asked you to elope with him."

Miss Gertrude tilted her coiffure forward and ran her amber back-comb through her front hair.

"No," she said, with the same indifference, "he didn't ask me to elope with him; he just wanted to know if I'd tour Hester Street with him in his canoe."

"I don't see no medals on you fer bein' the end man of the minstrel show. Don't let a boat trip to Coney go to your head; you might get brain-fever."

Gertrude Sprunt cast her eyes ceilingward.

"Well, one good thing, your brain will never cause you any trouble, Ethyl."

"Lord, Gert, cut out the airs! You ain't livin' in the rose suite on the tenth floor; you're only applyin' nail-polishes and cuticle-lotions down here in the basement."

"There's something else I'm doing, too," retorted Miss Gertrude, with unruffled amiability. "I'm minding my own affairs."

They fell to work again after these happy sallies, and it was late afternoon before there came a welcome lull.

"Who's your last, Gert?"

"Mr. Chase." There were two red spots of excitement burning on Miss Sprunt's cheeks, and her eyes showed more black than blue.

"Not that little guy with the Now-I-lay-me-down-to-sleep face? Take it from me, he's a bank clerk or a library guy. Thank Heaven, I ain't got no cheap skates on my staff!"

Miss Gertrude flushed up to her eyes.

"He may be a clerk, but--"

Mr. Chase entered quietly. There was a gentle, even shrinking smile upon his features, and he carried a small offering covered with purple tissue-paper, which he placed nervously upon the edge of the table.

"Good afternoon, Miss Sprunt." He pushed the greeting toward her. "May I hope that you will accept these?"

"Oh, Mr. Chase, aren't you good?" The very quality of her voice was suddenly different, like the softening of a violin note when you mute the strings.

He drew his chair up to the table with the quiet satisfaction of a man ready for a well-merited meal.

"You and violets are inseparable in my mind, Miss Sprunt, because you both suggest the spring."

She laughed in low, rich tones, and her shirtwaist rose and fell rapidly from short breathing.

"Why," she said, "that's the very nicest thing any one ever said to me!"

His hand, long-fingered and virile, drooped over the edge of the bowl into the warm water; he leaned forward with his chest against the line of the table.

"What do you mean, Miss Sprunt?"

She took his dripping hand from the water and dried each finger separately.

"If you had been doing high pink finishes for three years you'd know the difference when a dull white came along--I--I mean, I--"

He smoothed away her embarrassment with a raillery: "By your polish shall ye be known."

"Yes," she replied, with more seriousness than banter; "that's exactly what I mean. I'm not used to men whose polish extends beyond their finger-nails."

She worked with her head bent low, and he regarded the shining coils of her hair.

"How droll you are!" he said.

She pushed back the half-moons of his fingers with an orange stick dipped in cold-cream.

"You ought to watch your cuticle, Mr. Chase, and be more regular about the manicures. Your hands are more delicate than most."

He started.

"Of course I should pay more attention to them, but I'm pretty busy and--and--"

"Of course I understand manicures are expensive luxuries these days."

"Yes."

"I have become so accustomed to hotel trade that I forgot that some hands may be earning salaries instead of drawing incomes."

Her manner was unobtrusive, and he laughed quietly.

"You are quite a student of types, Miss Sprunt."

"Wouldn't I have to be, Mr. Chase, me doing as many as a hundred fingers a day, and something different coming with each ten of them?"

"You are delightful," he said, letting his amused eyes rest upon her; "but I fear you've mysterious methods of divination."

"Oh, I don't know," she said, airily. "Just take you, for example. I don't need an X-ray to see that there isn't a Fifth Avenue tailor sign stitched inside your coat. It doesn't take any mind-reader to know that you come in from the Sixth Avenue entrance and not from the elevator. Besides, when you come to live in a lobster palace you usually have your claws done to match your shell. I'd have given you a dull white finish without your even asking for it."

"I see where I stand with you, Miss Sprunt."

"Oh, it isn't that, Mr. Chase. I guess, if the truth was known, the crawfish stand better with me than the lobsters."

Mr. Chase's fingers closed lightly over hers.

"I believe you mean what you say," he said.

"You bet your life I do!" she said, emphasizing each word with a buff. She looked up, met his insistent eyes, and laughed in a high, unnatural pitch. "Other hand, please," she whispered.

When he finally rose to depart she rose with him, holding her nosegay at arm's-length and tilting her head.

"It's almost time for wood violets, Miss Sprunt. I'll try to get you some."

"Oh, don't trouble, Mr. Chase; these hothouse ones are beauties."

"I--I'll be dropping in soon again, Miss Sprunt. I think I'll take your advice and be more regular about my manicures."

"Oh," she said, in some confusion, "I--I didn't mean that. You can care for them in between times yourself."

At the Sixth Avenue exit he paused.

"Good night," he said, slowly.

"Good night," she responded, her lips warm and parted like a child's.

When the click of his footsteps had echoed down the marble corridor Miss Ethyl crossed the room and indulged in several jerky sniffs at the little floral offering. "Well, whatta you know about that little tin Willie, bringin' a goil violets in May? You better stick to the

million-dollar kid, Gert; he's the strawberries-in-December brand."

For once Miss Gertrude did not retort; her eyes, full of dreams, were gazing past the doorway which had so recently framed the modest figure of Mr. Chase.

Promptly at six Mr. Barker appeared for his appointment. He bespoke the last word and epilogue in sartorial perfection--his suit was a trifle too brown and a trifle too creased and his carnation a bit too large, but he radiated good cheer and perfume.

Miss Ethyl nudged Miss Gertrude excitedly.

"Pipe the rig, Gert; he makes you look like a hole in a doughnut."

He entered, suave as oil.

"Well, sis, ready?"

"Oh, Mr. Barker, you're all dressed up--and look at me. I--"

"Ah-h-h, how do you like it? Some class, eh? Guess your Uncle Fuller ain't some hit--brand-new gear from tonneau to rear wheels."

Mr. Barker circumvolved on one heel, holding his coat-tails apart.

"I blew me right fer this outfit; but it's woith the money, sis."

"If I had known I'd have gone home and dressed up, too."

"Well, whatta you know about that?" exclaimed Mr. Barker, observing her up and down. "That there shroud you're wearing is as classy as anything I've seen up in the lobby or any place else, and I've been all round the woild some, too. I know the real thing from the seconds every time."

Miss Gertrude worked into her gloves.

"I guess it is more becoming for a girl like me to go plainly."

"Believe me, kiddo"--Mr. Barker placed his hand blinker-fashion against the side of his mouth, and his lips took on an oblique slant--"take it from me, kiddo, when it comes to real feet-on-the-fender comfort, a nineteen-fifty suit with a extry pair of pants thrown in can make this rig feel like a busted tire."

"Well, Mr. Barker, I'm ready if you are."

He swung one arm akimbo with an outward circular movement, clicked his heels together, and straightened his shoulders until his speckled white

vest swelled.

"Hitch on, sis, and let's show Broadway we're in town!"

Gertrude took a pinch of sleeve between her gloved fingers; they fell into step. At the door she turned and nodded over one shoulder.

"Good night, Ethyl dear," she said, a trifle too sweetly.

A huge mahogany-colored touring-car caparisoned in nickel and upholstered in darker red panted and chugged at the Broadway curb. Mr. Barker helped her into the front seat, swung himself behind the steering-wheel, covered them over with a striped rug, and turned his shining monster into the flux of Broadway.

Miss Gertrude leaned her head back against the upholstery and breathed a deep-seated, satisfied sigh.

"This," she said, "is what I call living."

Mr. Barker grinned and let out five miles more to the hour.

"I guess this ain't got the Sixth Avenue 'L' skinned a mile!"

"Two miles," she said.

"Honest, sis, I could be arrested for what I think of the 'L.'"

"I know the furnishing of every third-floor front on the line," she replied, with a dreary attempt at jocoseness.

"Never mind, kiddo, I've got my eye on you," he sang, quoting from a street song of the hour.

They sped on silently, the wind singing in their ears.

"Want the shield up?"

"The what?"

"The glass front."

"No, thank you, Mr. Barker; this air is good."

"This old wagon can eat up the miles, all right, eh? She toured Egypt fer two months and never turned an ankle."

"To think of having traveled as you have."

"Me, I'm the best little traveler you ever seen. More than once I drove this car up a mountainside. Hold your hat--here goes, kiddo."

"I guess you'll think I'm slow, but this is the first time I've been in an automobile, except once when I was sent for in a taxi-cab for a private manicure."

"You think you could get used to mine, kiddo?" He nudged her elbow with his free arm; she drew herself back against the cushions.

"The way I feel now," she said, closing her eyes, "I could ride this way until the crack of doom."

They drew up before a flaring, electric-lighted café with an awning extending from the entrance out to the curb. A footman swung open the door, a doorman relieved Mr. Barker of his hat and light overcoat, a head waiter steered them through an Arcadia of palms, flower-banked tables, and small fountains to a mirrored corner, a lackey drew out their chairs, a pantry boy placed crisp rolls and small pats of sweet butter beside their plates and filled their tumblers with water from a crystal bottle, a waiter bent almost double wrote their order on a silver-mounted pad, and music faint as the symphony of the spheres came to them from a small gold balcony.

Miss Gertrude removed her gloves thoughtfully.

"That is what I call living," she repeated. She leaned forward, her elbows on the table, and the little bunch of violets at her belt worked out and fell to the floor. An attendant sprang to recover them.

"Let 'em go," said Barker. He drew a heavy-headed rose from the embankment between them and wiped its wet stem. "Here's a posy that's got them beat right."

She took it and pinned it at her throat. "Thanks," she said, glancing about her with glowing, interested eyes.

"This place makes Runey's lunch-room look like a two-weeks-old manicure."

"I told you I was goin' to show you the time of your life, didn't I? Any goil that goes out with me ain't with a piker."

"Gee!" said Gertrude; "if Ethyl could only see me now!"

She sipped her water, and the ice tinkled against the frail sides of the tumbler. A waiter swung a silver dome off a platter and served them a steaming and unpronounceable delicacy; a woman sang from the small gold balcony--life, wine, and jewels sparkled alike.

A page with converging lines of gilt balls down the front of his uniform passed picture post-cards, showing the café, from table to table. Gertrude asked for a lead-pencil and wrote one to a cousin in Montana, and Mr. Barker signed his name beneath hers.

They dallied with pink ices and French pastries, and he loudly requested the best cigar in the place.

"It's all in knowin' how to live," he explained. "I've been all over the woild, and there ain't much I don't know or ain't seen; but you gotta know the right way to go about things."

"Anybody could tell by looking at you that you are a man of the world," said Miss Gertrude.

It was eleven o'clock when they entered the car for the homeward spin. The cool air blew color and verve into her face; and her hair, responding to the night damp, curled in little grape-vine tendrils round her face.

"You're some swell little goil," remarked Mr. Barker, a cigar hung idle from one corner of his mouth.

"And you are some driver!" she retorted. "You run a car like a real chauffeur."

"I wouldn't own a car if I couldn't run it myself," he said. "I ran this car all through France last fall. There ain't no fun bein' steered like a mollycoddle."

"No one could ever accuse you of being a mollycoddle, Mr. Barker."

He turned and loosened the back of her seat until it reclined like a Morris chair. "My own invention," he said; "to lie back and watch the stars on a clear night sort of--of gives you a hunch what's goin' on up there."

She looked at him in some surprise. "You're clever, all right," she said, rather seriously.

"Wait till you know me better, kiddo. I'll learn you a whole lot about me that'll surprise you."

His hand groped for hers; she drew it away gently, but her voice was also gentle:

"Here we are home, Mr. Barker."

In front of her lower West Side rooming-house he helped her carefully to alight, regarding her sentimentously in the flare of the street lamp.

"You're my style, all right, kiddo. My speedometer registers you pretty high."

She giggled.

"I'm here to tell you that you look good to me, and--and--I--anything on fer to-morrow night?"

"No," she said, softly.

"Are you on?"

She nodded.

"I'll drop in and see you to-morrow," he said.

"Good," she replied.

"If nothin' unexpected comes up to-morrow night we'll take one swell spin out along the Hudson Drive and have dinner at the Vista. There's some swell scenery out along the Palisade drive when the moon comes up and shines over the water."

"Oh, Mr. Barker, that will be heavenly!"

"I'm some on the soft-soap stuff myself," he said.

"You're full of surprises," she agreed.

"I'll drop in and see you to-morrow, kiddo."

"Good night," she whispered.

"Good night, little sis," he replied.

They parted with a final hand-shake; as she climbed up to her room she heard the machine chug away.

The perfume of her rose floated about her like a delicate mist. She undressed and went to bed into a dream-world of shimmering women and hidden music, a world chiefly peopled by deferential waiters and scraping lackeys. All the night through she sped in a silent mahogany-colored touring-car, with the wind singing in her ears and lights flashing past like meteors.

* * * * *

When Miss Gertrude arrived at the Knockerbeck parlors next morning a little violet offering wrapped in white tissue-paper lay on her desk. They were fresh wood violets, cool and damp with dew. She flushed and placed them in a small glass vase behind the cold-cream case.

Her eyes were blue like the sky when you look straight up, and a smile trembled on her lips. Ten minutes later Mr. Barker, dust-begrimed and enveloped in a long linen duster, swaggered in. He peeled off his stout gloves; his fingers were black-rimmed and grease-splotched.

"Mornin', sis; here's a fine job for you. Took an unexpected business trip ten miles out, and the bloomin' spark-plug got to cuttin' up like a balky horse."

He crammed his gloves and goggles into spacious pockets and looked at Miss Gertrude with warming eyes.

"Durned if you ain't lookin' pert as a mornin'-glory to-day!"

She took his fingers on her hand and regarded them reprovingly.

"Shame on you, Mr. Barker, for getting yourself so mussed up!" cried Miss Sprunt.

"Looks like I need somebody to take care of me, doan it, sis?"

"Yes," she agreed, unblushingly.

Once in warm water, his hands exuded the odor of gasolene. She sniffed like a horse scenting the turf.

"I'd rather have a whiff of an automobile," she remarked, "than of the best attar of roses on the market."

"You ain't forgot about to-night, sis?"

She lowered her eyes.

"No, I haven't forgotten."

"There ain't nothin' but a business engagement can keep me off. I gotta big deal on, and I may be too busy to-night, but we'll go to-morrow sure."

"That'll be all right, Mr. Barker; business before pleasure."

"I'm pretty sure it'll be to-night, though. I--I don't like to have to wait too long."

He reached across the table suddenly and gripped hold of her working arm.

"Say, kiddo, I like you."

"Silly!" she said, softly.

"I ain't foolin'."

"I'll be ready at six," she said, lightly. "If you can't come let me know."

"I ain't the sort to do things snide," he said. "If I can't come I'll put you wise, all right."

"You certainly know how to treat a girl," she said.

"Let me get to likin' a goil, and there ain't nothin' I won't do for her."

"You sure can run a machine, Mr. Barker."

"You wait till I let loose some speed along the Hudson road, and then you'll see some real drivin'; last night wasn't nothin'."

"Oh, Mr. Barker!"

"Call me Jim," he said.

"Jim," she repeated, softly, after him.

The day was crowded with appointments. She worked unceasingly until the nerves at the back of her head were strained and aching, and tired shadows appeared under her eyes. The languor of spring oppressed her.

To her surprise, Mr. Chase appeared at four o'clock. At the sight of him the point of her little scissors slipped into the unoffending cuticle of the hand she was grooming. She motioned him to a chair along the wall.

"In just a few minutes, Mr. Chase."

"Thank you," he replied, seating himself and watching her with interested, near-sighted eyes.

A nervousness sent the blood rushing to her head. The low drone of Ethyl's voice talking to a customer, the tick of the clock, the click and sough of the elevator were thrice magnified. She could feel the gush of color to her face.

The fat old gentleman whose fingers she had been administering placed a generous bonus on the table and ambled out. She turned her burning eyes upon Mr. Chase and spoke slowly to steady her voice. She was ashamed of her unaccountable nervousness and of the suffocating dryness in her throat.

"Ready for you, Mr. Chase."

He came toward her with a peculiar slowness of movement, a characteristic slowness which was one of the trivial things which burned his attractiveness into her consciousness. In the stuffiness of her own little room she had more than once closed her eyes and deliberately pictured him as he came toward her table, gentle yet eager, with a deference which was new as it was delightful to her.

As he approached her she snapped a flexible file between her thumb and forefinger, and watched it vibrate and come to a jerky stop; then she looked up.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Chase."

"Good afternoon, Miss Sprunt. You see, I am following your advice." He took the chair opposite her.

"I--I want to thank you for the violets. They are the first real hint of May I've had."

"You knew they came from me?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"Why--I--why, I just knew."

She covered her confusion by removing and replacing crystal bottle-stoppers.

"I'm glad that you knew they came from me, Miss Sprunt."

"Yes, I knew that they could come from no one but you--they were so simple and natural and--sweet."

She laughed a pitch too high and plunged his fingers into water some degrees too hot. He did not wince, but she did.

"Oh, Mr. Chase, forgive me. I--I've scalded your fingers."

"Why," he replied, not taking his eyes from her face, "so you have!"
They both laughed.

Across the room Miss Ethyl coughed twice. "I always say," she observed to her customer, "a workin'-girl can't be too careful of her actions. That's why I am of a retiring disposition and don't try to force myself on nobody."

Mr. Chase regarded the shadows beneath Miss Sprunt's eyes with a pucker between his own.

"You don't get much of the springtime in here, do you, Miss Sprunt?"

"No," she replied, smiling faintly. "The only way we can tell the seasons down here is by the midwinter Elks convention and the cloak drummers who come to buy fur coats in July."

"You poor little girl," he said, slowly. "What you need is air--good, wholesome air, and plenty of it."

"Oh, I get along all right," she said, biting at her nether lip.

"You're confined too closely, Miss Sprunt."

"Life isn't all choice," she replied, briefly.

"Forgive me," he said.

"I walk home sometimes," she said.

"You're fond of walking?"

"Yes, when I'm not too tired."

"Miss Sprunt, would--would you walk with me this evening? I know a quiet little place where we could dine together."

"Oh," she said, "I--I already have an engagement. I--"

She colored with surprise.

"You have an engagement?" His tones were suddenly flat.

"No," she replied, in tones of sudden decision, "I'd be pleased to go with you. I can do what I planned to-night any other time."

"Thank you, Miss Sprunt."

Her fingers trembled as she worked, and his suddenly closed over them.

"You poor, tired little girl," he repeated.

She gulped down her emotions.

"Miss Sprunt, this is neither the time nor the place for me to express myself, yet somehow our great moments come when we least expect them."

She let her limp fingers rest in his; she was strangely calm.

"I know it is always a great pleasure to have you come in, Mr. Chase."

"The first time I dropped in was chance, Miss Sprunt. You can see for yourself that I am not the sort of fellow who goes in for the little niceties like manicures. I'm what you might call the seedy kind. But the second time I dropped in for a manicure was not accident, nor the third time, nor the tenth--it was you."

"You've been extravagant all on account of me?" she parried.

"I've been more than that on account of you, dear girl. I've been consumed night and day by the sweet thought of you."

"Oh-h-h!" She placed one hand at her throat.

"Miss Sprunt, I am not asking anything of you; I simply want you to know me better. I want to begin to-night to try to teach you to reciprocate the immense regard--the love I feel for you."

She closed her eyes for a moment; his firm clasp of her hand tightened.

"You'll think I'm a bold girl, Mr. Chase; you'll--you'll--"

"Yes?"

"You'll think I'm everything I ought not to be, but you--you can't teach me what I already know."

"Gertrude!"

She nodded, swallowing back unaccountable tears.

"I never let myself hope, because I didn't think there was a chance, Mr. Chase."

"Dear, is it possible without knowing me--who, what I am--you--"

"I only know you," she said, softly. "That is all that matters."

"My little girl," he whispered, regarding her with unshed tears shining in his eyes.

She placed her two hands over her face for a moment.

"What is it, dear?"

She burrowed deeper into her hands.

"I'm so happy," she said, between her fingers.

They regarded each other with almost incredulous eyes, seeking to probe the web of enchantment their love had woven.

"I do not deserve this happiness, dearest." But his voice was a pæan of triumph.

"It is I who do not deserve," she said, in turn. "You are too--too everything for me."

They talked in whispers until there were two appointees ranged along the wall. He was loath to go; she urged him gently.

"I can't work while you are here, dear; return for me at six--no," she corrected, struck by a sudden thought, "at six-thirty."

"Let me wait for you, dearest," he pleaded.

She wagged a playful finger at him.

"Good-by until later."

"Until six-thirty, cruel one."

"Yes."

"There is so much to be said, Gertrude dear."

"To-night."

He left her lingeringly. They tried to cover up their fervent, low-voiced farewells with passive faces, but after he had departed her every feature was lyric.

Juliet might have looked like that when her love was young.

Mr. Barker arrived, but she met him diffidently, even shamefacedly. Before she could explain he launched forth:

"I'm sorry, kiddo, but we'll have to make it to-morrow night for that ride of oun. That party I was tellin' you about is goin' to get busy on that big deal, and I gotta do a lot of signin' up to-night."

Fate had carved a way for her with gentle hand.

"That's all right, Mr. Barker; just don't you feel badly about it." She felt a gush of sympathy for him; for all humanity.

"You understand, kiddo, don't you? A feller's got to stick to business as much as pleasure, and we'll hit the high places to-morrow night, all right, all right. You're the classiest doll I've met yet."

She swallowed her distaste.

"That's the right idea, Mr. Barker; business appointments are always important."

"I'll see you to-morrow mornin', and we'll fix up some swell party."

"Good night, Mr. Barker."

"So long, honey."

Directly after he departed Miss Ethyl bade her good night in cold, cracky tones.

"The goin's-on in this parlor don't make it no place for a minister's daughter, Miss Gertie Sprunt."

"Then you ought to be glad your father's a policeman," retorted her friend, graciously. "Good night, dearie."

She hummed as she put her table in order. At each footstep down the marble corridor her pulse quickened; she placed her cheeks in her hands, vise-fashion, to feel of their unnatural heat. When Mr. Chase finally came they met shyly and with certain restraint. Whispering together like diffident children, they went out, their hands lightly touching. Broadway was already alight; the cool spring air met them like tonic.

Like an exuberant lad, Mr. Chase led her to the curb. A huge, mahogany-colored touring-car, caparisoned in nickel and upholstered in a darker red, vibrated and snorted alongside. A chauffeur, with a striped rug across his knees, reached back respectfully and flung open the door. Like an automaton Gertrude placed her small foot upon the step and paused, her dumfounded gaze confronting the equally stunned eyes of the chauffeur. Mr. Chase aided and encouraged at her elbow.

"It's all right, dearest, it's all right; this is your surprise."

"Why," she gasped, her eyes never leaving the steel-blue shaved face of the chauffeur--"why--I--"

Mr. Chase regarded her in some anxiety. "What a surprised little girl you are! I shouldn't have taken you so unawares." He almost lifted her in.

"This machine is yours, Mr. Chase?"

"Yes, dear, this machine is _ours_."

"You never told me anything."

"There is little to tell, Gertrude. I have not used my cars to amount to anything since I'm back from Egypt. I've been pretty busy with affairs."

"Back from Egypt!"

"Do not look so helpless, dear. I'm only back three months from a trip round the world, and I've been putting up with hotel life meanwhile. Then I happened to meet you, and as long as you had me all sized up I just let it go--that's all, dear."

"You're not the Mr. Adam Chase who's had the rose suite on the tenth floor all winter?"

"That's me," he laughed.

Her slowly comprehending eyes did not leave his face.

"Why, I thought--I--you--"

"It was my use of the private elevator on the east side of the building that gave you the Sixth Avenue idea, and it was too good a joke on me to spoil, dearie."

She regarded him through blurry eyes.

"What must you think of me?"

He felt for her hand underneath the lap-robe.

"Among other things," he said, "I think that your eyes exactly match the violets I motored out to get for you this morning at my place ten miles up the Hudson."

"When did you go, dear?"

"Before you were up. We were back before ten, in spite of a spark-plug that gave us some trouble."

"Oh," she said.

The figure at the wheel squirmed to be off. She lay back faint against the upholstery.

"To think," she said, "that you should care for me!"

"My own dear girl!"

He touched a spring and the back of her seat reclined like a Morris chair.

"Lie back, dear. I invented that scheme so I can recline at night and watch the stars parade past. I toured that way all through Egypt."

The figure in the front seat gripped his wheel.

"Where are we going, Adam dear?" she whispered.

"This is your night, Gertrude; give James your orders."

She snuggled deeper into the dark-red upholstery, and their hands clasped closer beneath the robe.

"James," she said, in a voice like a bell, "take us to the Vista for dinner; afterward motor out along the Palisade drive, far out so that we can see the Hudson by moonlight."

“OUT THERE”,

by Susan Glaspell

The old man held the picture up before him and surveyed it with admiring but disapproving eye. "No one that comes along this way'll have the price for it," he grumbled. "It'll just set here 'till doomsday."

It did seem that the picture failed to fit in with the rest of the shop. A persuasive young fellow who claimed he was closing out his stock let the old man have it for what he called a song. It was only a little out-of-the-way store which subsisted chiefly on the framing of pictures. The old man looked around at his views of the city, his pictures of cats and dogs and gorgeous young women, his flaming bits of landscape. "Don't belong in here," he fumed, "any more 'an I belong in Congress."

And yet the old man was secretly proud of his acquisition. He seemed all at once to be lifted from his realm of petty tradesman to that of patron of art. There was a hidden dignity in his scowling as he shuffled about pondering the least ridiculous place for the picture.

It is not fair to the picture to try repainting it in words, for words reduce it to a lithograph. It was a bit of a pine forest, through which there exuberantly rushed an unspoiled little mountain stream. Chromos and works of art may deal with kindred subjects. There is just that one difference of dealing with them differently. "It ain't what you _see_, so much as what you can guess is there," was the thought it brought to the old man who was dusting it. "Now this frame ain't three feet long, but it wouldn't surprise me a bit if that timber kept right on for a hundred miles. I kind of suspect it's on a mountain--looks cool enough in there to be on a mountain. Wish I was there. Bet they never see no such days as we do in Chicago. Looks as though a man might call his soul his own--out there."

He began removing some views of Lincoln Park and some corpulent Cupids in order to make room in the window for the new picture. When he went outside to look at it he shook his head severely and hastened in to take away some ardent young men and women, some fruit and flowers and fish which he had left thinking they might "set it off." It was evident that the new picture did not need to be "set off." "And anyway," he told himself, in vindication of entrusting all his goods to one bottom, "I might as well take them out, for the new one makes them look so kind of sick that no one would have them, anyhow." Then he went back to mounting views with the serenity of one who stands for the finer things.

His clamorous little clock pointed to a quarter of six when he finally came back to the front of the store. It was time to begin closing up for the night, but for the minute he stood there watching the crowd of workers coming from the business district not far away over to the boarding-house region, a little to the west. He watched them as they came by in twos and threes and fours: noisy people and worn-out people, people hilarious and people sullen, the gaiety and the weariness, the acceptance and the rebellion of humanity--he saw it pass. "As if any of _them_ could buy it," he pronounced severely, adding, contemptuously, "or wanted to."

The girl was coming along by herself. He watched her as she crossed to his side of the street, thinking it was too bad for a poor girl to be as tired as that. She was dressed like many of the rest of them, and yet she looked different--like the picture and the chromo. She turned an indifferent glance toward the window, and then suddenly she stood there very still, and everything about her seemed to change. "For all the world," he told himself afterward, "as if she'd found a long-lost friend, and was 'fraid to speak for fear it was too good to be true."

She did seem afraid to speak--afraid to believe. For a minute she stood there right in the middle of the sidewalk, staring at the picture. And when she came toward the window it was less as if coming than as if drawn. What she really seemed to want to do was to edge away; yet she came closer, as close as she could, her eyes never leaving the picture, and then fear, or awe, or whatever it was made her look so queer gave way to wonder--that wondering which is ready to open the door to delight. She looked up and down the street as one rubbing one's eyes to make sure of a thing, and then it all gave way to a joy which lighted her pale little face like--"Well, like nothing I ever saw before," was all the old man could say of it. "Why, she'd never know if the whole fire department was to run right up here on the sidewalk," he gloated. Just then she drew herself up for a long breath. "See?" he chuckled, delightedly. "She knows it has a smell!" She looked toward the door, but shook her head. "Knows she can't pay the price," he interpreted her. Then, she stepped back and looked at the number above the door. "Coming again," he made of that; "ain't going to run no chances of losing the place." And then for a long time she stood there before the picture, so deeply and so strangely quiet that he could not translate her. "I can't just get the run of it," was his bewildered conclusion. "I don't see why it should make anybody act like that." And yet he must have understood more than he knew, for suddenly he was seeing her through a blur of tears.

As he began shutting up for the night he was so excited about the way she looked when she finally turned away that it never occurred to him to be depressed about her inability to pay the price.

He kept thinking of her, wondering about her, during the next day. At a little before six he took up his station near the front window. Once more the current of workers flowed by. "I'm an old fool," he told himself, irritated at the wait; "as if it makes any difference whether she comes or not--when she can't buy it, anyhow. She's just as big a fool as I am--liking it when she can't have it, only I'm the biggest fool of all--caring whether she likes it or not." But just then the girl passed quickly by a crowd of girls who were ahead of her and came hurrying across the street. She was walking fast, and looked excited and anxious. "Afraid it might be gone," he said--adding, grimly: "Needn't worry much about that."

She came up to the picture as some people would enter a church. And yet the joy which flooded her face is not well known to churches. "I'll tell you what it's like"--the old man's thoughts stumbling right into the heart of it--"it's like someone that's been wandering round in a desert country all of a sudden coming on a spring. She's _thirsty_--she's drinking it in--she can't get enough of it. It's--it's the water of life to her!" And then, ashamed of saying a thing that sounded as if it were out of a poem, he shook his shoulders roughly as if to shake off a piece

of sentiment unbecoming his age and sex.

He went to the door and watched her as she passed away. "I'll bet she'd never tip the scale to one hundred pounds," he decided. "Looks like a good wind could blow her away." She stooped a little and just as she passed from sight he saw that she was coughing.

Then the old man made what he prided himself was a great deduction. "She's been there, and she wants to go back. This kind of takes her back for a minute, and when she gets the breath of it she ain't so homesick."

All through those July days he watched each night for the frail-looking little girl who liked the picture of the pines. She would always come hurrying across the street in the same eager way, an eagerness close to the feverish. But the tenseness would always relax as she saw the picture. "She never looks quite so wilted down when she goes away as she does when she comes," the old man saw. "Upon my soul, I believe she really goes there. It's--oh, Lord"--irritated at getting beyond his depth--"I don't know!"

He never called it anything now but "Her Picture." One day at just ten minutes of six he took it out of the window. "Seems kind of mean," he admitted, "but I just want to find out how much she does think of it."

And when he found out he told himself that of all the mean men God had ever let live, he was the meanest. The girl came along in the usual hurried, anxious fashion. And when she saw the empty window he thought for a minute she was going to sink right down there on the sidewalk. Everything about her seemed to give way--as if something from which she had been drawing had been taken from her. The luminousness gone from her face, there were cruel revelations. "Blast my soul!" the old man muttered angrily, not far from tearfully. She looked up and down the noisy, dirty, parched street, then back to the empty window. For a minute she just stood there--that was the worst minute of all. And then--accepting--she turned and walked slowly away, walked as the too-weary and the too-often disappointed walk.

It was with not wholly steady hand that the old man hastened to replace the picture, all the while telling himself what he thought of himself: more low-down than the cat who plays with the mouse, meaner than the man who'd take the bone from the dog, less to be loved than the man who would kick over the child's play-house, only to be compared with the brute who would snatch the cup of water from the dying--such were the verdicts he pronounced. He thought perhaps she would come back, and stayed there until almost seven, waiting for her, though pretending it was necessary that he take down and then put up again the front curtains. All the next day he was restless and irritable. As if to make up to the girl for the contemptible trick he had played he spent a whole hour that afternoon arranging a tapestry background for the picture.

"She'll think," he told himself, "that this was why it was out, and won't be worried about its being gone again. This will just be a little sign to her that it's here to stay."

He began his watch that night at half-past five. After fifteen minutes the thought came to him that she might be so disheartened she would go home by another street. He became so gloomily certain she would do this that he was jubilant when he finally saw her coming along on the other side--coming purposelessly, shorn of that eagerness which had always been able, for the moment, to vanquish the tiredness. But when she came to the place where she always crossed the street she only stood there an instant and then, a little more slowly, a little more droopingly, walked on. She had given up! She was not coming over!

But she did come. After she had gone a few steps she hesitated again and this time started across the street. "That's right," approved the old man, "never give up the ship!"

She passed the store as if she were not going to look in; she seemed trying not to look, but her head turned--and she saw the picture. First her body seemed to stiffen, and then something--he couldn't make out whether or not it was a sob--shook her, and as she came toward the picture on her white, tired face were the tears.

"Don't you worry," he murmured affectionately to her retreating form, "it won't never be gone again."

The very next week he was put to the test. The kind of lady who did not often pass along that street entered the shop and asked to see the picture in the window. He looked at her suspiciously. Then he frowned at her, as he stood there, fumbling. _Her_ picture! What would she think? What would she do? Then a crafty smile stole over his face and he walked to the window and got the picture. "The price of this picture, madame," he said, haughtily, "is forty dollars,"--adding to himself, "That'll fix her."

But the lady made no comment, and stood there holding the picture up before her. "I will take it," she said, quietly.

He stared at her stupidly. Forty dollars! Then it must be that the picture was better than the young man had known. "Will you wrap it, please?" she asked. "I will take it with me."

He turned to the back of the store. Forty dollars!--he kept repeating it in dazed fashion. And they had raised the rent on him, and the papers said coal would be high that winter--those facts seemed to have something to do with forty dollars. _Forty dollars!_--it was hammering at him, overwhelmed him, too big a sum to contend with. With long, grim stroke he tore off the wrapping paper; stoically he began folding it.

But something was the matter. The paper would not go on right. Three times he took it off, and each time he could not help looking down at the picture of the pines. And each time the forest seemed to open a little farther; each time it seemed bigger--bigger even than forty dollars; it seemed as if it knew things --things more important than even coal and rent. And then the strangest thing of all happened: the forest faded away into its own shadowy distances, and in its place was a noisy, crowded, sun-baked street, and across the street was eagerly hurrying an anxious little girl, a frail little wisp of a girl who probably should not be crossing hot, noisy streets at all--then a light in tired eyes, a smile upon a worn face, relief as from a cooling breeze--and anyway, suddenly furious at the lady, furious at himself--“he'd be gol- darned if it wasn't her picture!”

He walked firmly back to the front of the store.

“I forgot at first,” he said, brusquely, “that this picture belongs to someone else.”

The lady looked at him in astonishment. “I do not understand,” she said.

“There's nothing to understand,” he fairly shouted, “except that it belongs to someone else!”

She turned away, but came back to him. “I will give you fifty dollars for it,” she said, in her quiet way.

“Madame,” he thundered at her, “you can stand there and offer me five hundred dollars, and I'm here to tell you that this picture is not for sale. Do you hear?”

“I certainly do,” replied the lady, and walked from the store.

He was a long time in cooling off. “I tell you,” he stormed to a very blue Lake Michigan he was putting into a frame, “it's hers--it's hern --and anybody that comes along here with any nonsense is just going to hear from me!”

In the days which followed he often thought to go out and speak to her, but perhaps the old man had a restraining sense of values. He planned some day to go out and tell her the picture was hers, but that seemed a silly thing to tell her, for surely she knew it anyway. He worried a good deal about her cough, which seemed to be getting worse, and he had it all figured out that when cold weather came he would have her come in where it was warm, and take her look in there. He felt that he knew all about her, and though he did not know her name, though he had never heard her speak one word, in some ways he felt closer to her than to any one else in the world.

Yet if the old man had known just how it was with the girl it is altogether unlikely that he would have understood. It would have mystified and disappointed him had he known that she had never seen a pine forest or a mountain in her life. Indeed there was a great deal about the little girl which the old man, together with almost all the rest of the world, would not have understood.

Not that the surface facts about her were either incomprehensible or interesting. The tale of her existence would sound much like that of a hundred other girls in the same city. Inquiry about her would have developed the facts that she did typewriting for a land company, that she did not seem to have any people, and lived at a big boarding-house. At the boarding-house they would have told you that she was a nice little thing, quiet as a mouse, and that it was too bad she had to work, for she seemed more than half sick. There the story would have rested, and the real things about her would not have been touched.

She worked for the Chicago branch of a big Northwestern land company. They dealt in the lands of Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. The things she sat at her typewriter and wrote were of the wonders of that great country: the great timber lands, the valleys and hills, towering mountain peaks and rushing rivers. She typewrote "literature" telling how there was a chance for every man out there, how the big, exhaustless land was eager to yield of its store to all who would come and seek. Day after day she wrote those things telling how the sick were made well and the poor were made rich, how it was a land of indescribable wonders which the feeble pen could not hope to portray.

And the girl with whom almost everything in life had gone wrong came to think of Out There as the place where everything was right. It was the far country where there was no weariness nor loneliness, the land where one did not grow tired, where one never woke up in the morning too tired to get up, where no one went to bed at night too tired to go to sleep. The street-cars did not ring their gongs so loud Out There, the newsboys had pleasant voices, and there were no elevated trains. It was a pure, high land which knew no smoke nor dirt, a land where great silences drew one to the heart of peace, where the people in the next room did not come in and bang things around late at night. Out There was a wide land where buildings were far apart and streets were not crowded. Even the horses did not grow tired Out There. Oh, it was a land where dreams came true--a beautiful land where no one ate prunes, where the gravy was never greasy and the potatoes never burned. It was a land of flowers and birds and lovely people--a land of wealth and health and many smiles.

Her imagination made use of it all. She knew how men were reclaiming the desert of Idaho, of the tremendous undeveloped wealth of what had been an almost undiscovered State. She thrilled to the poetry of irrigation. Often when hot and tired and dusty her fancy would follow the little mountain stream from its birth way up in the clouds, her imagination

rushing with it through sweetening forest and tumbling with it down cooling rocks until finally strong, bold, wise men guided it to the desert which had yearned for it through all the years, and the grateful desert smiled rich smiles of grain and flowers. She could make it more like a story than any story in any book. And she could always breathe better in thinking of the pine forests of Oregon. There was something liberating--expanding--in just the thought of them. She dreamed cooling dreams about them, dreams of their reaching farther than one's fancy could reach, big widening dreams of their standing there serene in the consciousness of their own immensity. They stood to her for a beautiful idea: the idea of space, of room--room for everybody, and then much more room! Even one's understanding grew big as one turned to them.

And she loved to listen for the Pacific Ocean, coming from incomprehensible distances and unknowable countries, now rushing with passion to the wild coast of Oregon, again stealing into the Washington harbours. She loved to address the letters to Portland, Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma--all those pulsing, vivid cities of a country of big chances and big beauty. She loved to picture Seattle, a city builded upon many hills--how wonderful that a city should be builded upon hills!--in Chicago there was nothing that could possibly be thought of as a hill. And she loved to shut her eyes and let the great mountain peak grow in the distance, as one could see it from Portland--how noble a thing to see a mountain peak from a city! Sometimes she trembled before that consciousness of a mountain. Often when so tired she scarcely knew what she was doing she found she was saying her prayers to a mountain. Indeed, Out There seemed the place to send one's prayers--for was it not a place where prayers were answered?

During that summer when the West was overrun with tourists who grumbled about everything from the crowded trains to the way in which sea-foods were served, this little girl sat in one of the hot office buildings of Chicago and across the stretch of miles drew to herself the spirit of that country of coming days. Thousands rode in Pullman cars along the banks of the Columbia--saw, and felt not; she sat before her typewriter in a close, noisy room and heard the cooling rush of waters and got the freeing message of the pines. In some rare moments when she rose from the things about her to the things of which she dreamed she possessed the whole great land, and as the sultry days sapped of her meagre strength, and the bending over the typewriter cramped an already too cramped chest she clung with a more and more passionate tenacity to the bigness and the beauty and rightness of things Out There. And it was so kind to her--that land of deep breaths and restoring breezes. It never shut her out. It always kept itself bigger and more wonderful than one could ever hope to fancy it.

And the night she found the picture she knew that it was all really so. That was why it was so momentous a night. The picture was a dream visualised--a dreamer vindicated. They had pictures in the office, of

course--some pictures trying to tell of that very kind of a place. But those were just pictures; this proved it, told what it meant. It told that she had been right, and there was joy in knowing that she had known. She clung to the picture as one would to that which proves as real all one has long held dear, loved it as the dreamer loves that which secures him in his dreaming.

She came to think of it as her own abiding place. Often when too tired for long wings of fancy she would just sink down in the deep, cool shadows of the pines, beside the little river which one knew so well was the gift of distant snows. It rested her most of all; it quieted her.

She smiled sometimes to think how no one in the office knew about it, wondered what they would think if they knew. Often she would find someone in the office looking at her strangely. She used to wonder about it a little.

And then one day Mr. Osborne sent for her to come into his office. He acted so queerly. As she came in and sat down near his desk he swung his chair around and sat there with his back to her. After that he got up and walked to the window.

The head stenographer had complained of her cough. She said she did not think it right either to the girl or to the rest of them for her to be there. She said she hated to speak of it, but could not stand it any longer. That had been the week before, and ever since he had been putting it off. But now he could put it off no longer; the head stenographer was valuable, and besides he knew that she was right.

And so he told her--this was all he could think of just then--that they were contemplating some changes in the office, and for a time would have less desk room. If he sent her machine to her home, would she be willing to do her work there for a while? Hers was the kind of work that could be done at home.

She was sorry, for she wondered if she could find a place in her room for the typewriter, and it did not seem there would be air enough there to last her all day long. And she had grown fond of the office, with its "literature" and pictures and maps and the men who had just come from Out There coming in every once in a while. It was a bond--a place to touch realities. But of course there was nothing for her to do but comply, and she made no comment on the arrangement.

She pushed her chair back and rose to go. "Are you alone in the world?" he asked abruptly then,

"Yes; I--oh yes."

It was too much for him. "How would you like," he asked recklessly, "to

have me get you transportation out West?”

She sank back in her chair. Every particle of colour had left her face. Her deep eyes had grown almost wild. “Oh,” she gasped--“you can't mean--you don't think--”

“You wouldn't want to go?”

“I mean”--it was but a whisper--“it would be--too wonderful.”

“You would like it then?”

She only nodded; but her lips were parted, her eyes glowing. He wondered why he had never seen before how different looking and--yes, beautiful, in a strange kind of way--she was.

“I see you have a cold,” he said, “and I think you would get along better out there. I'll see if I can fix up the transportation, and get something with our people in one of the towns that would be good for you.”

She leaned back in her chair and sat there smiling at him. Something in the smile made him say, abruptly: “That's all; you may go now, and I'll send a boy with your machine.”

She walked through the streets as one who had already found another country. More than one turned to look at her. She reached her room at last and pulling her one little chair up to the window sat staring out across the alley at the brick wall across from her. But she was not seeing a narrow alley and a high brick wall. She was seeing rushing rivers and mighty forests and towering peaks. She leaned back in her chair--an indulgence less luxurious than it sounds, as the chair only reached the middle of her back--and looked out at the high brick wall and saw a snow-clad range of hills. But she was tired; this tremendous idea was too much for her; the very wonder of it was exhausting. She lay down on her bed--radiant, but languid. Soon she heard a rush of waters. At first it was only someone filling the bath-tub, but after a while it was the little stream which flowed through her forest. And then she was not lying on a lumpy bed; she was sinking down under pine trees--all so sweet and still and cool. But an awful thing was happening!--the forest was on fire--it was choking and burning her! She awoke to find smoke from the building opposite pouring into her room; flies were buzzing about, and her face and hands were hot.

She did little work in the next few days. It was hard to go on with the same work when waiting for a thing which was to make over one's whole life. The stress of dreams changing to hopes caused a great languor to come over her. And her chair was not right for her typewriter, and the smoke came in all the time. Strangely enough Out There seemed farther

away. Sometimes she could not go there at all; she supposed it was because she was really going.

At the close of the week she went to the office with her work. She was weak with excitement as she stepped into the elevator. Would Mr. Osborne have the transportation for her? Would he tell her when she was to go?

But she did not see Mr. Osborne at all. When she asked for him the clerk just replied carelessly that he was not there. She was going to ask if he had left any message for her, but the telephone rang then and the man to whom she was talking turned away. Someone was sitting at her old desk, and they did not seem to be making the changes they had contemplated; everyone in the office seemed very busy and uncaring, and because she knew her chin was trembling she turned away.

She had a strange feeling as she left the office: as if standing on ground which quivered, an impulse to reach out her hand and tell someone that something must be done right away, a dreadful fear that she was going to cry out that she could not wait much longer.

All at once she found that she was crossing the street, and saw ahead the little art store with the wonderful picture which proved it was all really so. In the same old way, her step quickened. It would show her again that it was all just as she had thought it was, and if that were true, then it must be true also that Mr. Osborne was going to get her the transportation. It would prove that everything was all right.

But a cruel thing happened. It failed her. It was just as beautiful--but something a long way off, impossible to reach. Try as she would, she could not get _into_ it, as she used to. It was only a picture; a beautiful picture of some pine trees. And they were very far away, and they had nothing at all to do with her.

Through the window, at the back of the store, she saw the old man standing with his back to her. She thought of going in and asking to sit down--she wanted to sit down--but perhaps he would say something cross to her--he was such a queer looking old man--and she knew she would cry if anything cross was said to her. That he had watched for her each night, that he had tried and tried to think of a way of finding her, that he would have been more glad to see her than to see anyone in the world, would have been kinder to her than anyone on earth would have been--those were the things she did not know. And so--more lonely than she had ever been before--she turned away.

On Monday she felt she could wait no longer. It did not seem that it would be _safe_. She got ready to go to see Mr. Osborne, but the getting ready tired her so that she sat a long time resting, looking out at the high brick wall beyond which there was nothing at all. She was counting the blocks, thinking of how many times she would have to cross the

street. But just then it occurred to her that she could telephone.

When she came back upstairs she crept up on the bed and lay there very still. The boy had said that Mr. Osborne was away and would be gone two weeks. No one in the office had heard him say anything about her transportation.

All through the day she lay there, and what she saw before her was a narrow alley and a high brick wall. She had lost her mountains and her forests and her rivers and her lakes. She tried to go out to them in the same old way--but she could not get beyond the high brick wall. She was shut in. She tried to draw them to her, but they could not come across the wall. It shut them out. She tried to pray to the great mountain which one could see from Portland. But even prayers could get no farther than the wall.

Late that afternoon, because she was so shut in that she was choking, because she was consumed with the idea that she must claim her country now or lose it forever, she got up and started for the picture. It was a long, long way to go, and dreadful things were in between--people who would bump against her, hot, uneven streets, horses that might run over her--but she must make the journey. She must make it because the things that she lived on were slipping from her--and she was choking--sinking down--and all alone.

Step by step, never knowing just how her foot was going to make the next step, sick with the fear that people were going to run into her--the streets going up and down, the buildings round and round, she did go; holding to the window casings for the last few steps--each step a terrible chasm which she was never sure she was going to be able to cross--she was there at last. And in the window as she stood there, swayingly, was a dark, blurred thing which might have been anything at all. She tried to remember why she had come. What _was_ it--? And then she was sinking down into an abyss.

That the hemorrhage came then, that the old man came out and found her and tenderly took her in, that he had her taken where she should have been taken long before, that the doctors said it was too late, and that soon their verdict was confirmed--those are the facts which would seem to tell the rest of the story. But deep down beneath facts rests truth, and the truth is that this is a story with the happiest kind of a happy ending. What facts would call the breeze from an electric fan was in truth the gracious breath of the pines. And when the nurse said "She's going," she was indeed going, but to a land of great spaces and benign breezes, a land of deep shadows and rushing waters. For a most wondrous thing had happened. She had called to the mountain, and the mountain had heard her voice; and because it was so mighty and so everlasting it drew her to itself, across high brick walls and past millions of hurrying, noisy people--oh, a most triumphant flight! And the mountain said--"I

give you this whole great land. It is yours because you have loved it so well. Hills and valleys and rivers and forests and lakes--it is all for you." Yes, the nurse was quite right; she was going: going for a long sweet sleep beneath trees of many shadows, beside clear waters which had come from distant snows--really going "Out There."

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Lifted Masks*, by Susan Glaspell

JOINT OWNERS IN SPAIN

from The Project Gutenberg Ebook of *Meadow Grass*, by Alice Brown

The Old Ladies' Home, much to the sorrow of its inmates, "set back from the road." A long, box-bordered walk led from the great door down to the old turnpike, and thickly bowering lilac-bushes forced the eye to play an unsatisfied hide-and-seek with the view. The sequestered old ladies were quite unreconciled to their leaf-hung outlook; active life was presumably over for them, and all the more did they long to "see the passing" of the little world which had usurped their places. The house itself was very old, a stately, square structure, with pillars on either side of the door, and a fanlight above. It had remained unpainted now for many years, and had softened into a mellow lichen-gray, so harmonious and pleasing in the midst of summer's vital green, that the few artists who ever heard of Tiverton sought it out, to plant umbrella and easel in the garden, and sketch the stately relic; photographers, also, made it one of their accustomed haunts. Of the artists the old ladies disapproved, without a dissenting voice. It seemed a "shaller" proceeding to sit out there in the hot sun for no result save a wash of unreal colors on a white ground, or a few hasty lines indicating no solid reality; but the photographers were their constant delight, and they rejoiced in forming themselves into groups upon, the green, to be "took" and carried away with the house.

One royal winter's day, there was a directors' meeting in the great south room, the matron's parlor, a sprat bearing the happy charm of perfect loyalty to the past, with its great fireplace, iron dogs and crane, its settle and entrancing corner cupboards. The hard-working president of the board was speaking hastily and from a full heart, conscious that another instant's discussion might bring the tears to her eyes:--

"May I be allowed to say--it's irrelevant, I know, but I should like the satisfaction of saying it--that this is enough to make one vow never to have anything to do with an institution of any sort, from this time forth for evermore?"

For the moment had apparently come when a chronic annoyance must be recognized as unendurable. They had borne with the trial, inmates and directors, quite as cheerfully as most ordinary people accept the inevitable; but suddenly the tension had become too great, and the universal patience snapped. Two of the old ladies, Mrs. Blair and Miss Dyer, who were settled in the Home for life, and who, before going there, had shown no special waywardness of temper, had proved utterly incapable of living in peace with any available human being; and as the Home had insufficient accommodations, neither could be isolated to fight her "black butterflies" alone. No inmate, though she were cousin to Hercules, could be given a room to herself; and the effect of this dual system on these two, possibly the most eccentric of the number, had proved disastrous in the extreme. Each had, in her own favorite fashion, "kicked over the traces," as the matron's son said in town-meeting (much to the joy of the village fathers), and to such purpose that, to continue the light-minded simile, very little harness was left to guide them withal. Mrs. Blair, being "high spirited," like all the Coxes from whom she sprung, had now so tyrannized over the last of her series of room-mates, so browbeaten and intimidated her, that the latter had actually taken to her bed with a slow-fever of discouragement, announcing that "she'd rather go to the poor-farm and done with it than resk her life there another night; and she'd like to know what had become of that hunderd dollars her nephew Thomas paid down in bills to get her into the Home, for she'd be thankful to them that laid it away so antic to hand it back afore another night went over her head, so't she could board somewheres decent till 'twas gone, and then starve if she'd got to!"

If Miss Sarah Ann Dyer, known also as a disturber of the public peace, presented a less aggressive front to her kind, she was yet, in her own way, a cross and a hindrance to their spiritual growth. She, poor woman, lived in a scarcely varying state of hurt feeling; her tiny world seemed to her one close federation, existing for the sole purpose of infringing on her personal rights; and though she would not take the initiative in battle, she lifted up her voice in aggrieved lamentation over the tragic incidents decreed for her alone. She had perhaps never directly reproached her own unhappy room-mate for selecting a comfortable chair, for wearing squeaking shoes, or singing "Hearken, ye sprightly," somewhat early in the morning, but she chanted those ills through all her waking hours in a high, yet husky tone, broken by frequent sobs. And therefore, as a result of these domestic whirlwinds and too stagnant pools, came the directors' meeting, and the helpless protest of the exasperated president. The two cases were discussed for an hour longer, in the dreary fashion pertaining to a question which has long been supposed to have but one side; and then it remained for Mrs. Mitchell, the new director, to cut the knot with the energy of one to whom a difficulty is fresh.

"Has it ever occurred to you to put them together?" asked she. "They

are impossible people; so, naturally, you have selected the very mildest and most Christian women to endure their nagging. They can't live with the saints of the earth. Experience has proved that. Put them into one room, and let them fight it out together."

The motion was passed with something of that awe ever attending a Napoleonic decree, and passed, too, with the utmost good-breeding; for nobody mentioned the Kilkenny cats. The matron compressed her lips and lifted her brows, but said nothing; having exhausted her own resources, she was the more willing to take the superior attitude of good-natured scepticism.

The moving was speedily accomplished; and at ten o'clock, one morning, Mrs. Blair was ushered into the room where her forced colleague sat by the window, knitting. There the two were left alone. Miss Dyer looked up, and then heaved a tempestuous sigh over her work, in the manner of one not entirely surprised by its advent, but willing to suppress it, if such alleviation might be. She was a thin, colorless woman, and infinitely passive, save at those times when her nervous system conflicted with the scheme of the universe. Not so Mrs. Blair. She had black eyes, "like live coals," said her awed associates; and her skin was soft and white, albeit wrinkled. One could even believe she had reigned a beauty, as the tradition of the house declared. This morning, she held her head higher than ever, and disdained expression except that of an occasional nasal snort. She regarded the room with the air of an impartial though exacting critic; two little beds covered with rising-sun quilts, two little pine bureaus, two washstands. The sunshine lay upon the floor, and in that radiant pathway Miss Dyer sat.

"If I'd ha' thought I should ha' come to this," began Mrs. Blair, in the voice of one who speaks perforce after long sufferance, "I'd ha' died in my tracks afore I'd left my comfortable home down in Tiverton Holler. Story-'n'-a-half house, a good sullar, an' woods nigh-by full o' sarsaparilla an' goldthread! I've moved more times in this God-forsaken place than a Methodist preacher, fust one room an' then another; an' bad is the best. It was poor pickin's enough afore, but this is the crowner!"

Miss Dyer said nothing, but two large tears rolled down and dropped on her work. Mrs. Blair followed their course with gleaming eyes endowed with such uncomfortable activity that they seemed to pounce with every glance.

"What under the sun be you carryin' on like that for?" she asked, giving the handle of the water-pitcher an emphatic twitch to make it even with the world. "You 'ain't lost nobody, have ye, sence I moved in here?"

Miss Dyer put aside her knitting with ostentatious abnegation, and

began rocking herself back and forth in her chair, which seemed not of itself to sway fast enough, and Mrs. Blair's voice rose again, ever higher and more metallic:--

"I dunno what you've got to complain of more'n the rest of us. Look at that dress you've got on,--a good thick thibet, an' mine's a cheap, sleazy alpaca they palmed off on me because they knew my eyesight ain't what it was once. An' you're settin' right there in the sun, gittin' het through, an' it's cold as a barn over here by the door. My land! if it don't make me mad to see anybody without no more sperit than a wet rag! If you've lost anybody, why don't ye say so? An' if it's a mad fit, speak out an' say that! Give me anybody that's got a tongue in their head, _I_ say!"

But Miss Dyer, with an unnecessary display of effort, was hitching her chair into the darkest corner of the room, the rockers hopelessly snarling her yarn at every move.

"I'm sure I wouldn't keep the sun off'n anybody," she said, tearfully. "It never come into my head to take it up, an' I don't claim no share of anything. I guess, if the truth was known, 'twould be seen I'd been used to a house lookin' south, an' the fore-room winders all of a glare o' light, day in an' day out, an' Madeira vines climbin' over 'em, an' a trellis by the front door; but that's all past an' gone, past an' gone! I never was one to take more 'n belonged to me; an' I don't care who says it, I never shall be. An' I'd hold to that, if 'twas the last word I had to speak!"

This negative sort of retort had an enfeebling effect upon Mrs. Blair.

"My land!" she exclaimed, helplessly. "Talk about my tongue! Vinegar's nothin' to cold molasses, if you've got to plough through it."

The other sighed, and leaned her head upon her hand in an attitude of extreme dejection. Mrs. Blair eyed her with the exasperation of one whose just challenge has been refused; she marched back and forth through the room, now smoothing a fold of the counterpane, with vicious care, and again pulling the braided rug to one side or the other, the while she sought new fuel for her rage. Without, the sun was lighting snowy knoll and hollow, and printing the fine-etched tracery of the trees against a crystal sky. The road was not usually much frequented in winter time, but just now it had been worn by the week's sledding into a shining track, and several sleighs went jingling up and down.

Tiverton was seizing the opportunity of a perfect day and the best of "going," and was taking its way to market. The trivial happenings of this far-away world had thus far elicited no more than a passing glance from Mrs. Blair; she was too absorbed in domestic warfare even to peer down through the leafless lilac-boughs, in futile wonderment as to

whose bells they might be, ringing merrily past. On one journey about the room, however, some chance arrested her gaze. She stopped, transfixed.

"Forever!" she cried. Her nervous, blue-veined hands clutched at her apron and held it; she was motionless for a moment. Yet the picture without would have been quite devoid of interest to the casual eye; it could have borne little significance save to one who knew the inner life history of the Tiverton Home, and thus might guess what slight events wrought all its joy and pain. A young man had set up his camera at the end of the walk, and thrown the cloth over his head, preparatory to taking the usual view of the house. Mrs. Blair recovered from her temporary inaction. She rushed to the window, and threw up the sash. Her husky voice broke strenuously upon the stillness:--

"Here! you keep right where you be! I'm goin' to be took! You wait till I come!"

She pulled down the window, and went in haste to the closet, in the excess of her eagerness stumbling recklessly forward into its depths.

"Where's my bandbox?" Her voice came piercingly from her temporary seclusion. "Where'd they put it? It ain't here in sight! My soul! where's my bunnit?"

These were apostrophes thrown off in extremity of feeling; they were not questions, and no listener, even with the most friendly disposition in the world, need have assumed the necessity of answering. So, wrapped in oblivion to all earthly considerations save that of her Own inward gloom, the one person who might have responded merely swayed back and forth, in martyred silence. But no such spiritual withdrawal could insure her safety. Mrs. Blair emerged from the closet, and darted across the room with the energy of one stung by a new despair. She seemed about to fall upon the neutral figure in the corner, but seized the chair-back instead, and shook it with such angry vigor that Miss Dyer cowered down in no simulated fright.

"Where's my green bandbox?" The words were emphasized by cumulative shakes, "Anybody that's took that away from me ought to be b'iled in ile! Hangin's too good for 'em, but le' me git my eye on 'em an' they shall swing for 't! Yes, they shall, higher 'n Gil'roy's kite!"

The victim put both trembling hands to her ears.

"I ain't deaf!" she wailed.

"Deef? I don't care whether you're deaf or dumb, or whether you're nummer'n a beetle! It's my bandbox I'm arter. Isr'el in Egypt! you might grind some folks in a mortar an' you couldn't make 'em speak!"

It was of no use. Intimidation had been worse than hopeless; even bodily force would not avail. She cast one lurid glance at the supine figure, and gave up the quest in that direction as sheer waste of time. With new determination, she again essayed the closet, tossing shoes and rubbers behind her in an unsightly heap, quite heedless of the confusion of rights and lefts. At last, in a dark corner, behind a blue chest, she came upon her treasure. Too hurried now for reproaches, she drew it forth, and with trembling fingers untied the strings. Casting aside the cover, she produced a huge scoop bonnet of a long-past date, and setting it on her head, with the same fevered haste, tied over it the long figured veil destined always to make an inseparable part of her state array. She snatched her stella shawl from the drawer, threw it over her shoulders, and ran out of the room.

Miss Dyer was left quite bewildered by these erratic proceedings, but she had no mind to question them; so many stories were rife in the Home of the eccentricities embodied in the charitable phrase "Mis' Blair's way" that she would scarcely have been amazed had her terrible room-mate chosen to drive a coach and four up the chimney, or saddle the broom for a midnight revel. She drew a long breath of relief at the bliss of solitude, closed her eyes, and strove to regain the lost peace, which, as she vaguely remembered, had belonged to her once in a shadowy past.

Silence had come, but not to reign. Back flew Mrs. Blair, like a whirlwind. Her cheeks wore each a little hectic spot; her eyes were flaming. The figured veil, swept rudely to one side, was borne backwards on the wind of her coming, and her thin hair, even in those few seconds, had become wildly disarranged.

"He's gone!" she announced, passionately. "He kep' right on while I was findin' my bunnit. He come to take the house, an' he'd ha' took me an' been glad. An' when I got that plaguy front door open, he was jest drivin' away; an' I might ha' hollered till I was black in the face, an' then I couldn't ha' made him hear."

"I dunno what to say, nor what not to," remarked Miss Dyer, to her corner. "If I speak, I'm to blame; an' so I be if I keep still."

The other old lady had thrown herself into a chair, and was looking wrathfully before her.

"It's the same man that come from Sudleigh last August," she said, bitterly. "He took the house then, an' said he wanted another view when the leaves was off; an' that time I was laid up with my stiff ankle, an' didn't git into it, an' to-day my bunnit was hid, an' I lost it ag'in."

Her voice changed. To the listener, it took on an awful meaning.

"An' I should like to know whose fault it was. If them that owns the winder, an' set by it till they see him comin', had spoke up an' said, 'Mis' Blair, there's the photograph man. Don't you want to be took?' it wouldn't ha' been too late! If anybody had answered a civil question, an' said, 'Your bunnit-box sets there behind my blue chist,' it wouldn't ha' been too late then! An' I 'ain't had my likeness took sence I was twenty year old, an' went to Sudleigh Fair in my changeable _visite_ an' leghorn hat, an' Jonathan wore the brocaded weskit he stood up in, the next week Thursday. It's enough to make a minister swear!"

Miss Dyer rocked back and forth.

"Dear me!" she wailed. "Dear me suz!"

The dinner-bell rang, creating a blessed diversion. Miss Blair, rendered absent-minded by her grief, went to the table still in her bonnet and veil; and this dramatic entrance gave rise to such morbid though unexpressed curiosity that every one forbore, for a time, to wonder why Miss Dyer did not appear. Later, however, when a tray was prepared and sent up to her (according to the programme of her bad days), the general commotion reached an almost unruly point, stimulated as it was by the matron's son, who found an opportunity to whisper one garrulous old lady that Miss Dyer had received bodily injury at the hands of her roommate, and that Mrs. Blair had put on her bonnet to be ready for the sheriff when he should arrive. This report, judiciously started, ran like prairie fire; and the house was all the afternoon in a pleasant state of excitement. Possibly the matron will never know why so many of the old ladies promenaded the corridors from dinnertime until long after early candlelight, while a few kept faithful yet agitated watch from the windows. For interest was divided; some preferred to see the sheriff's advent, and others found zest in the possibility of counting the groans of the prostrate victim.

When Mrs. Blair returned to the stage of action, she was much refreshed by her abundant meal and the strong tea which three times daily heartened her for battle. She laid aside her bonnet, and carefully folded the veil. Then she looked about her, and, persistently ignoring all the empty chairs, fixed an annihilating gaze on one where the dinner-tray still remained.

"I s'pose there's no need o' my settin' down," she remarked, bitingly. "It's all in the day's work. Some folks are waited on; some ain't. Some have their victuals brought to 'em an' pushed under their noses, an' some has to go to the table; when they're there, they can take it or leave it. The quality can keep their waiters settin' round day in an' day out, fillin' up every chair in the room. For my part, I should

think they'd have an extension table moved in, an' a snowdrop cloth over it!"

Miss Dyer had become comparatively placid, but now she gave way to tears.

"Anybody can move that waiter that's a mind to," she said, tremulously. "I would myself, if I had the stren'th; but I 'ain't got it. I ain't a well woman, an' I 'ain't been this twenty year. If old Dr. Parks was alive this day, he'd say so. 'You 'ain't never had a chance,' he says to me. 'You've been pull-hauled one way or another sence you was born.' An' he never knew the wust on't, for the wust hadn't come."

"Humph!" It was a royal and explosive note. It represented scorn for which Mrs. Blair could find no adequate utterance. She selected the straightest chair in the room, ostentatiously turned its back to her enemy, and seated herself. Then, taking out her knitting, she strove to keep silence; but that was too heavy a task, and at last she broke forth, with renewed bitterness,--

"To think of all the wood I've burnt up in my kitchen stove an' air-tight, an' never thought nothin' of it! To think of all the wood there is now, growin' an' rottin' from Dan to Beersheba, an' I can't lay my fingers on it!"

"I dunno what you want o' wood. I'm sure this room's warm enough."

"You don't? Well, I'll tell ye. I want some two-inch boards, to nail up a partition in the middle o' this room, same as Josh Marden done to spite his wife. I don't want more'n my own, but I want it mine."

Miss Dyer groaned, and drew an uncertain hand across her forehead.

"You wouldn't have no gre't of an outlay for boards," she said, drearily. "'Twouldn't have to be knee-high to keep me out. I'm no hand to go where I ain't wanted; an' if I ever was, I guess I'm cured on't now."

Mrs. Blair dropped her knitting in her lap. For an instant, she sat there motionless, in a growing rigidity; but light was dawning in her eyes. Suddenly she came to her feet, and tossed her knitting on the bed.

"Where's that piece o' chalk you had when you marked out your tumbler-quilt?" The words rang like a martial order.

Miss Dyer drew it forth from the ancient-looking bag, known as a cavo, which was ever at her side.

"Here 'tis," she said, in her forlornest quaver. "I hope you won't do nothin' out o' the way with it. I should hate to git into trouble here. I ain't that kind."

Mrs. Blair was too excited to hear or heed her. She was briefly, flashingly, taking in the possibilities of the room, her bright black eyes darting here and there with fiery insistence. Suddenly she went to the closet, and, diving to the bottom of a baggy pocket in her "t'other dress," drew forth a ball of twine. She chalked it, still in delighted haste, and forced one end upon her bewildered room-mate.

"You go out there to the middle square o' the front winder," she commanded, "an' hold your end o' the string down on the floor. I'll snap it."

Miss Dyer cast one despairing glance about her, and obeyed.

"Crazy!" she muttered. "Oh my land! she's crazy's a loon. I wisht Mis' Mitchell'd pitch her tent here a spell!"

But Mrs. Blair was following out her purpose in a manner exceedingly methodical. Drawing out one bed, so that it stood directly opposite her kneeling helper, she passed the cord about the leg of the bedstead and made it fast; then, returning to the middle of the room, she snapped the line triumphantly. A faint chalk-mark was left upon the floor.

"There!" she cried. "Leggo! Now, you gi' me the chalk, an' I'll go over it an' make it whiter."

She knelt and chalked with the utmost absorption, crawling along on her knees, quite heedless of the despised alpaca; and Miss Dyer, hovering in a corner, timorously watched her. Mrs. Blair staggered to her feet, entangled by her skirt, and pitching like a ship at sea.

"There!" she announced. "Now here's two rooms. The chalk-mark's the partition. You can have the mornin' sun, for I'd jest as soon live by a taller candle if I can have somethin' that's my own. I'll chalk a lane into the closet, an' we'll both keep a right o' way there. Now I'm to home, an' so be you. Don't you dast to speak a word to me unless you come an' knock here on my headboard,--that's the front door,--an' I won't to you. Well, if I ain't glad to be alone! I've hung my harp on a willer long enough!"

It was some time before the true meaning of the new arrangement penetrated Miss Dyer's slower intelligence; but presently she drew her chair nearer the window and thought a little, chuckling as she did so. She, too, was alone.

The sensation was new and very pleasant. Mrs. Blair went back and forth

through the closet-lane, putting her clothes away, with high good humor. Once or twice she sang a little--Derby's Ram and Lord Lovel--in a cracked voice. She was in love with solitude.

Just before tea, Mrs. Mitchell, in some trepidation, knocked at the door, to see the fruits of contention present and to come. She had expected to hear loud words; and the silence quite terrified her, emphasizing, as it did, her own guilty sense of personal responsibility. Miss Dyer gave one appealing look at Mrs. Blair, and then, with some indecision, went to open the door, for the latch was in her house.

"Well, here you are, comfortably settled!" began Mrs. Mitchell. She had the unmistakable tone of professional kindness; yet it rang clear and true. "May I come in?"

"Set right down here," answered Miss Dyer, drawing forward a chair. "I'm real pleased to see ye."

"And how are you this afternoon?" This was addressed to the occupant of the other house, who, quite oblivious to any alien presence, stood busily rubbing the chalk-marks from her dress.

Mrs. Blair made no answer. She might have been stone deaf, and as dumb as the hearthstone bricks. Mrs. Mitchell cast an alarmed glance at her entertainer.

"Isn't she well?" she said, softly.

"It's a real pretty day, ain't it?" responded Miss Dyer. "If 'twas summer time, I should think there'd be a sea turn afore night. I like a sea turn myself. It smells jest like Old Boar's Head."

"I have brought you down some fruit." Mrs. Mitchell was still anxiously observing the silent figure, now absorbed in an apparently futile search in a brocaded work-bag. "Mrs. Blair, do you ever cut up bananas and oranges together?"

No answer. The visitor rose, and unwittingly stepped across the dividing line.

"Mrs. Blair--" she began, but she got no further.

Her hostess turned upon her, in surprised welcome.

"Well, if it ain't Mis' Mitchell! I can't say I didn't expect you, for I see you goin' into Miss Dyer's house not more'n two minutes ago. Seems to me you make short calls. Now set right down here, where you can see out o' the winder. That square's cracked, but I guess the

directors'll put in another."

Mrs. Mitchell was amazed, but entirely interested. It was many a long day since any person, official or private, had met with cordiality from this quarter.

"I hope you and our friend are going to enjoy your room together," she essayed, with a hollow cheerfulness.

"I expect to be as gay as a cricket," returned Mrs. Blair, innocently. "An' I do trust I've got good neighbors. I like to keep to myself, but if I've got a neighbor, I want her to be somebody you can depend upon."

"I'm sure Miss Dyer means to be very neighborly." The director turned, with a smile, to include that lady in the conversation. But the local deafness had engulfed her. She was sitting peacefully by the window, with the air of one retired within herself, to think her own very remote thoughts. The visitor mentally improvised a little theory, and it seemed to fit the occasion. They had quarrelled, she thought, and each was disturbed at any notice bestowed on the other.

"I have been wondering whether you would both like to go sleighing with me some afternoon?" she ventured, with the humility so prone to assail humankind in a frank and shrewish presence. "The roads are in wonderful condition, and I don't believe you'd take cold. Do you know, I found Grandmother Eaton's foot-warmers, the other day! I'll bring them along."

"Law! I'd go anywheres to git out o' here," said Mrs. Blair, ruthlessly. "I dunno when I've set behind a horse, either. I guess the last time was the day I rid up here for good, an' then I didn't feel much like lookin' at outdoor. Well, I guess you _be_ a new director, or you never'd ha' thought on't!"

"How do you feel about it, Miss Dyer?" asked the visitor. "Will you go,--perhaps on, Wednesday?"

The other householder moved uneasily. Her hands twitched at their knitting; a flush came over her cheeks, and she cast a childishly appealing glance at her neighbor across the chalkline. Her eyes were filling fast with tears. "Save me!" her look seemed to entreat "Let me not lose this happy fortune!" Mrs. Blair interpreted the message, and rose to the occasion with the vigor of the intellectually great.

"Mis' Mitchell," she said, clearly, "I may be queer in my notions, but it makes me as nervous as a witch to have anybody hollerin' out o' my winders. I don't care whether it's company nor whether it's my own folks. If you want to speak to Miss Dyer, you come along here after me,--don't you hit the partition now!--right out o' my door an' into

her'n. Here, I'll knock! Miss Dyer, be you to home?"

The little old lady came forward, fluttering and radiant in the excess of her relief.

"Yes, I guess I be," she said, "an' all alone, too! I see you go by the winder, an' I was in' hopes you'd come in!"

Then the situation dawned upon Mrs. Mitchell with an effect vastly surprising to the two old pensioners. She turned from one to the other, including them both in a look of warm loving-kindness. It was truly an illumination. Hitherto, they had thought chiefly of her winter cloak and nodding ostrich plume; now, at last, they saw her face, and read some part of its message.

"You poor souls!" she cried. "Do you care so much as that? 'O you poor souls!"

Miss Dyer fingered her apron and looked at the floor, but her companion turned brusquely away, even though she trod upon the partition in her haste.

"Law! it's nothin' to make such a handle of" she said. "Folks don't want to be under each other's noses all the time. I dunno's anybody could stan' it, unless 'twas an emmet. They seem to git along swarmin' round together."

Mrs. Mitchell left the room abruptly.

"Wednesday or Thursday, then!" she called over her shoulder.

The next forenoon, Mrs. Blair made her neighbor a long visit. Both old ladies had their knitting, and they sat peacefully swaying back and forth, recalling times past, and occasionally alluding to their happy Wednesday.

"What I really come in for," said Mrs. Blair, finally, "was to ask if you don't think both our settin'-rooms need new paper."

The other gave one bewildered glance about her.

"Why, 'tain't been on more 'n two weeks," she began; and then remembrance awoke in her, and she stopped. It was not the scene of their refuge and conflict that must be considered; it was the house of fancy built by each unto herself. Invention did not come easily to her as yet, and she spoke with some hesitation.

"I've had it in mind myself quite a spell, but somehow I 'ain't been able to fix on the right sort o' paper."

"What do you say to a kind of a straw color, all lit up with tulips?" inquired Mrs. Blair; triumphantly.

"Ain't that kind o' gay?"

"Gay? Well, you want it gay, don't ye? I dunno why folks seem to think they've got to live in a hearse because they expect to ride in one! What if we be gittin' on a little mite in years? We ain't underground yit, be we? I see a real good ninepenny paper once, all covered over with green brakes. I declare if 'twa'n't sweet pretty! Well, whether I paper or whether I don't, I've got some thoughts of a magenta sofy. I'm tired to death o' that old horsehair lounge that sets in my clock-room. Sometimes I wish the moths would tackle it, but I guess they've got more sense. I've al'ays said to myself I'd have a magenta sofy when I could git round to it, and I dunno's I shall be any nearer to it than I be now."

"Well, you are tasty," said Miss Dyer, in some awe. "I dunno how you come to think o' that!"

"Priest Rowe had one when I wa'n't more 'n twenty. Some o' his relations give it to him (he married into the quality), an' I remember as if 'twas yisterday what a tew there was over it. An' I said to myself then, if ever I was prospered I'd have a magenta sofy. I 'ain't got to it till now, but now I'll have it if I die for't."

"Well, I guess you're in the right on't." Miss Dyer spoke absently, glancing from the window in growing trouble. "O Mis' Blair!" she continued, with a sudden burst of confidence, "you don't think there's a storm brewin', do you? If it snows Wednesday, I shall give up beat!"

Mrs. Blair, in her turn, peered at the smiling sky.

"I hope you ain't one o' them kind that thinks every fair day's a weather breeder," she said. "Law, no! I don't b'lieve it will storm; an' if it does, why, there's other Wednesdays comin'!"

BY THE MORNING BOAT,

by Sarah Orne Jewett

On the coast of Maine, where many green islands and salt inlets fringe the deep-cut shore line; where balsam firs and bayberry bushes send their fragrance far seaward, and song-sparrows sing all day, and the tide runs plashing in and out among the weedy ledges; where cowbells tinkle on the hills and herons stand in the shady coves,--on the lonely coast of Maine stood a small gray house facing the morning light. All the weather-beaten houses of that region face the sea apprehensively, like the women who live in them.

This home of four people was as bleached and gray with wind and rain as one of the pasture rocks close by. There were some cinnamon rose bushes under the window at one side of the door, and a stunted lilac at the other side. It was so early in the cool morning that nobody was astir but some shy birds, that had come in the stillness of dawn to pick and flutter in the short grass.

They flew away together as some one softly opened the unlocked door and stepped out. This was a bent old man, who shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked at the west and the east and overhead, and then took a few lame and feeble steps farther out to see a wooden vane on the barn. Then he sat down on the doorstep, clasped his hands together between his knees, and looked steadily out to sea, scanning the horizon where some schooners had held on their course all night, with a light westerly breeze. He seemed to be satisfied at sight of the weather, as if he had been anxious, as he lay unassured in his north bedroom, vexed with the sleeplessness of age and excited by thoughts of the coming day. The old seaman dozed as he sat on the doorstep, while dawn came up and the world grew bright; and the little birds returned, fearfully at first, to finish their breakfast, and at last made bold to hop close to his feet.

After a time some one else came and stood in the open door behind him.

"Why, father! seems to me you've got an early start; 't ain't but four o'clock. I thought I was foolish to get up so soon, but 't wa'n't so I could sleep."

"No, darter." The old man smiled as he turned to look at her, wide awake on the instant. "'T ain't so soon as I git out some o' these 'arly mornin's. The birds wake me up singin', and it's plenty light, you know. I wanted to make sure 'Lisha would have a fair day to go."

"I expect he'd have to go if the weather wa'n't good," said the woman.

"Yes, yes, but 'tis useful to have fair weather, an' a good sign some says it is. This is a great event for the boy, ain't it?"

"I can't face the thought o' losin' on him, father." The woman came forward a step or two and sat down on the doorstep. She was a hard-worked, anxious creature, whose face had lost all look of youth. She was apt, in the general course of things, to hurry the old man and to spare little time for talking, and he was pleased by this acknowledged unity of their interests. He moved aside a little to give her more room, and glanced at her with a smile, as if to beg her to speak freely. They were both undemonstrative, taciturn New Englanders; their hearts were warm with pent-up feeling, that summer morning, yet it was easier to understand one another through silence than through speech.

"No, I couldn't git much sleep," repeated the daughter at last. "Some things I thought of that ain't come to mind before for years,--things I don't relish the feelin' of, all over again."

"'T was just such a mornin' as this, pore little 'Lisha's father went off on that last v'y'ge o' his," answered the old sailor, with instant comprehension. "Yes, you've had it master hard, pore gal, ain't you? I advised him against goin' off on that old vessel with a crew that wa'n't capable."

"Such a mornin' as this, when I come out at sun-up, I always seem to see her top-s'ls over there beyond the p'int, where she was to anchor. Well, I thank Heaven 'Lisha was averse to goin' to sea," declared the mother.

"There's dangers ashore, Lucy Ann," said the grandfather, solemnly; but there was no answer, and they sat there in silence until the old man grew drowsy again.

"Yisterday was the first time it fell onto my heart that 'Lisha was goin' off," the mother began again, after a time had passed. "P'r'aps folks was right about our needing of him. I've been workin' every way I could to further him and git him a real good chance up to Boston, and now that we've got to part with him I don't see how to put up with it."

"All nateral," insisted the old man. "My mother wept the night through before I was goin' to sail on my first v'y'ge; she was kind of satisfied, though, when I come home next summer, grown a full man, with my savin's in my pocket, an' I had a master pretty little figured shawl I'd bought for her to Bristol."

"I don't want no shawls. Partin' is partin' to me," said the woman.

"T ain't everybody can stand in her fore-door an' see the chimbleys o' three child'n's houses without a glass," he tried eagerly to console her. "All ready an' willin' to do their part for you, so as you could let 'Lisha go off and have his chance."

"I don't know how it is," she answered, "but none on 'em never give me the rooted home feelin' that 'Lisha has. They was more varyin' and kind o' fast growin' and scatterin'; but 'Lisha was always 'Lisha when he was a babe, and I settled on him for the one to keep with me."

"Then he's just the kind to send off, one you ain't got to worry about. They're all good child'n," said the man. "We've reason to be thankful none on 'em's been like some young sprigs, more grief 'n glory to their folks. An' I ain't regrettin' 'Lisha's goin' one mite; I believe you'd rather go on doin' for him an' cossetin'. I think 't was high time to shove him out o' the nest."

"You ain't his mother," said Lucy Ann.

"What be you goin' to give him for his breakfast?" asked the stern grandfather, in a softened, less business-like voice.

"I don't know's I'd thought about it, special, sir. I did lay aside that piece o' apple pie we had left yisterday from dinner," she confessed.

"Fry him out a nice little crisp piece o' pork, Lucy Ann, an' 't will relish with his baked potatoes. He'll think o' his breakfast more times 'n you expect. I know a lad's feelin's when home's put behind him."

The sun was up clear and bright over the broad sea inlet to the eastward, but the shining water struck the eye by its look of vacancy. It was broad daylight, and still so early that no sails came stealing out from the farmhouse landings, or even from the gray groups of battered fish-houses that overhung, here and there, a sheltered cove. Some crows and gulls were busy in the air; it was the time of day when the world belongs more to birds than to men.

"Poor 'Lisha!" the mother went on compassionately. "I expect it has been a long night to him. He seemed to take it in, as he was goin' to bed, how 't was his last night to home. I heard him thrashin' about kind o' restless, sometimes."

"Come, Lucy Ann, the boy ought to be stirrin'!" exclaimed the old sailor, without the least show of sympathy. "He's got to be ready when John Sykes comes, an' he ain't so quick as some lads."

The mother rose with a sigh, and went into the house. After her own

sleepless night, she dreaded to face the regretful, sleepless eyes of her son; but as she opened the door of his little bedroom, there lay Elisha sound asleep and comfortable to behold. She stood watching him with gloomy tenderness until he stirred uneasily, his consciousness roused by the intentness of her thought, and the mysterious current that flowed from her wistful, eager eyes.

But when the lad waked, it was to a joyful sense of manliness and responsibility; for him the change of surroundings was coming through natural processes of growth, not through the uprooting which gave his mother such an aching heart.

A little later Elisha came out to the breakfast-table, arrayed in his best sandy-brown clothes set off with a bright blue satin cravat, which had been the pride and delight of pleasant Sundays and rare holidays. He already felt unrelated to the familiar scene of things, and was impatient to be gone. For one thing, it was strange to sit down to breakfast in Sunday splendor, while his mother and grandfather and little sister Lydia were in their humble every-day attire. They ate in silence and haste, as they always did, but with a new constraint and awkwardness that forbade their looking at one another. At last the head of the household broke the silence with simple straightforwardness.

"You've got an excellent good day, 'Lisha. I like to have a fair start myself. 'T ain't goin' to be too hot; the wind's working into the north a little."

"Yes, sir," responded Elisha.

"The great p'int about gittin' on in life is bein' able to cope with your headwinds," continued the old man earnestly, pushing away his plate. "Any fool can run before a fair breeze, but I tell ye a good seaman is one that gits the best out o' his disadvantages. You won't be treated so pretty as you expect in the store, and you'll git plenty o' blows to your pride; but you keep right ahead, and if you can't run before the wind you can always beat. I ain't no hand to preach, but preachin' ain't goin' to sarve ye now. We've gone an' fetched ye up the best we could, your mother an' me, an' you can't never say but you've started amongst honest folks. If a vessel's built out o' sound timber an' has got good lines for sailin', why then she's seaworthy; but if she ain't, she ain't; an' a mess o' preachin' ain't goin' to alter her over. Now you're standin' out to sea, my boy, an' you can bear your home in mind and work your way, same's plenty of others has done."

It was a solemn moment; the speaker's voice faltered, and little Lydia dried her tearful blue eyes with her gingham apron. Elisha hung his head, and patted the old spotted cat which came to rub herself against

his trousers-leg. The mother rose hastily, and hurried into the pantry close by. She was always an appealing figure, with her thin shoulders and faded calico gowns; it was difficult to believe that she had once been the prettiest girl in that neighborhood. But her son loved her in his sober, undemonstrative way, and was full of plans for coming home, rich and generous enough to make her proud and happy. He was half pleased and half annoyed because his leave-taking was of such deep concern to the household.

"Come, Lyddy, don't you take on," he said, with rough kindness. "Let's go out, and I'll show you how to feed the pig and 'tend to the chickens. You'll have to be chief clerk when I'm gone."

They went out to the yard, hand in hand. Elisha stopped to stroke the old cat again, as she ran by his side and mewed. "I wish I was off and done with it; this morning does seem awful long," said the boy.

"Ain't you afraid you'll be homesick an' want to come back?" asked the little sister timidly; but Elisha scorned so poor a thought.

"You'll have to see if grandpa has 'tended to these things, the pig an' the chickens," he advised her gravely. "He forgets 'em sometimes when I'm away, but he would be cast down if you told him so, and you just keep an eye open, Lyddy. Mother's got enough to do inside the house. But grandsir'll keep her in kindlin's; he likes to set and chop in the shed rainy days, an' he'll do a sight more if you'll set with him, an' let him get goin' on his old seafarin' times."

Lydia nodded discreetly.

"An', Lyddy, don't you loiter comin' home from school, an' don't play out late, an' get 'em fussy, when it comes cold weather. And you tell Susy Draper,"--the boy's voice sounded unconcerned, but Lydia glanced at him quickly,--"you tell Susy Draper that I was awful sorry she was over to her aunt's, so I couldn't say good-by."

Lydia's heart was the heart of a woman, and she comprehended. Lydia nodded again, more sagely than before.

"See here," said the boy suddenly. "I'm goin' to let my old woodchuck out."

Lydia's face was blank with surprise. "I thought you promised to sell him to big Jim Hooper."

"I did, but I don't care for big Jim Hooper; you just tell him I let my wood-chuck go."

The brother and sister went to their favorite playground between the

ledges, not far from the small old barn. Here was a clumsy box with wire gratings, behind which an untamed little wild beast sat up and chattered at his harmless foes. "He's a whopping old fellow," said Elisha admiringly. "Big Jim Hooper sha'n't have him!" and as he opened the trap, Lydia had hardly time to perch herself high on the ledge, before the woodchuck tumbled and scuttled along the short green turf, and was lost among the clumps of juniper and bayberry just beyond.

"I feel just like him," said the boy. "I want to get up to Boston just as bad as that. See here, now!" and he flung a gallant cart-wheel of himself in the same direction, and then stood on his head and waved his legs furiously in the air. "I feel just like that."

Lydia, who had been tearful all the morning, looked at him in vague dismay. Only a short time ago she had never been made to feel that her brother was so much older than herself. They had been constant playmates; but now he was like a grown man, and cared no longer for their old pleasures. There was all possible difference between them that there can be between fifteen years and twelve, and Lydia was nothing but a child.

"Come, come, where be ye?" shouted the old grandfather, and they both started guiltily. Elisha rubbed some dry grass out of his short-cropped hair, and the little sister came down from her ledge. At that moment the real pang of parting shot through her heart; her brother belonged irrevocably to a wider world.

"Ma'am Stover has sent for ye to come over; she wants to say good-by to ye!" shouted the grandfather, leaning on his two canes at the end of the bam. "Come, step lively, an' remember you ain't got none too much time, an' the boat ain't goin' to wait a minute for nobody."

"Ma'am Stover?" repeated the boy, with a frown. He and his sister knew only too well the pasture path between the two houses. Ma'am Stover was a bedridden woman, who had seen much trouble,--a town charge in her old age. Her neighbors gave to her generously out of their own slender stores. Yet with all this poverty and dependence, she held firm sway over the customs and opinions of her acquaintance, from the uneasy bed where she lay year in and year out, watching the far sea line beyond a pasture slope.

The young people walked fast, sometimes running a little way, light-footed, the boy going ahead, and burst into their neighbor's room out of breath.

She was calm and critical, and their excitement had a sudden chill.

"So the great day's come at last, 'Lisha?" she asked; at which 'Lisha was conscious of unnecessary aggravation.

"I don't know's it's much of a day--to anybody but me," he added, discovering a twinkle in her black eyes that was more sympathetic than usual. "I expected to stop an' see you last night; but I had to go round and see all our folks, and when I got back 't was late and the tide was down, an' I knew that grandsir couldn't git the boat up all alone to our lower landin'."

"Well, I didn't forgit you, but I thought p'r'aps you might forgit me, an' I'm goin' to give ye somethin'. 'T is for your folks' sake; I want ye to tell 'em so. I don't want ye never to part with it, even if it fails to work and you git proud an' want a new one. It's been a sight o' company to me." She reached up, with a flush on her wrinkled cheeks and tears in her eyes, and took a worn old silver watch from its nail, and handed it, with a last look at its white face and large gold hands, to the startled boy.

"Oh, I can't take it from ye, Ma'am Stover. I'm just as much obliged to you," he faltered.

"There, go now, dear, go right along." said the old woman, turning quickly away. "Be a good boy for your folks' sake. If so be that I'm here when you come home, you can let me see how well you've kep' it."

The boy and girl went softly out, leaving the door wide open, as Ma'am Stover liked to have it in summer weather, her windows being small and few. There were neighbors near enough to come and shut it, if a heavy shower blew up. Sometimes the song sparrows and whippoorwills came hopping in about the little bare room.

"I felt kind ofshamed to carry off her watch," protested Elisha, with a radiant face that belied his honest words.

"Put it on," said proud little Lydia, trotting alongside; and he hooked the bright steel chain into his buttonhole, and looked down to see how it shone across his waistcoat. None of his friends had so fine a watch; even his grandfather's was so poor a timekeeper that it was rarely worn except as a decoration on Sundays or at a funeral. They hurried home. Ma'am Stover, lying in her bed, could see the two slight figures nearly all the way on the pasture path; flitting along in their joyful haste.

It was disappointing that the mother and grandfather had so little to say about the watch. In fact, Elisha's grandfather only said "Pore creatur'" once or twice, and turned away, rubbing his eyes with the back of his hand. If Ma'am Stover had chosen to give so rich a gift, to know the joy of such generosity, nobody had a right to protest. Yet nobody knew how much the poor wakeful soul would miss the only one of her meagre possessions that seemed alive and companionable in lonely

hours. Somebody had said once that there were chairs that went about on wheels, made on purpose for crippled persons like Ma'am Stover; and Elisha's heart was instantly filled with delight at the remembrance. Perhaps before long, if he could save some money and get ahead, he would buy one of those chairs and send it down from Boston; and a new sense of power filled his honest heart. He had dreamed a great many dreams already of what he meant to do with all his money, when he came home rich and a person of consequence, in summer vacations.

The large leather valise was soon packed, and its owner carried it out to the roadside, and put his last winter's overcoat and a great new umbrella beside it, so as to be ready when John Sykes came with the wagon. He was more and more anxious to be gone, and felt no sense of his old identification with the home interests. His mother said sadly that he would be gone full soon enough, when he joined his grandfather in accusing Mr. Sykes of keeping them waiting forever and making him miss the boat. There were three rough roundabout miles to be traveled to the steamer landing, and the Sykes horses were known to be slow. But at last the team came nodding in sight over a steep hill in the road.

Then the moment of parting had come, the moment toward which all the long late winter and early summer had looked. The boy was leaving his plain little home for the great adventure of his life's fortunes. Until then he had been the charge and anxiety of his elders, and under their rule and advice. Now he was free to choose; his was the power of direction, his the responsibility; for in the world one must be ranked by his own character and ability, and doomed by his own failures. The boy lifted his burden lightly, and turned with an eager smile to say farewell. But the old people and little Lydia were speechless with grief; they could not bear to part with the pride and hope and boyish strength, that were all their slender joy. The worn-out old man, the anxious woman who had been beaten and buffeted by the waves of poverty and sorrow, the little sister with her dreaming heart, stood at the bars and hungrily watched him go away. They feared success for him almost as much as failure. The world was before him now, with its treasures and pleasures, but with those inevitable disappointments and losses which old people know and fear; those sorrows of incapacity and lack of judgment which young hearts go out to meet without foreboding. It was a world of love and favor to which little Lydia's brother had gone; but who would know her fairy prince, in that disguise of a country boy's bashfulness and humble raiment from the cheap counter of a country store? The household stood rapt and silent until the farm wagon had made its last rise on the hilly road and disappeared.

"Well, he's left us now," said the sorrowful, hopeful old grandfather. "I expect I've got to turn to an' be a boy again myself. I feel to hope 'Lisha'll do as well as we covet for him. I seem to take it in, all my father felt when he let me go off to sea. He stood where I'm

standin' now, an' I was just as triflin' as pore 'Lisha, and felt full as big as a man. But Lord! how I give up when it come night, an' I took it in I was gone from home!"

"There, don't ye, father," said the pale mother gently. She was, after all, the stronger of the two. "'Lisha's good an' honest-hearted. You'll feel real proud a year from now, when he gits back. I'm so glad he's got his watch to carry,--he did feel so grand. I expect them poor hens is sufferin'; nobody's thought on 'em this livin' mornin'. You'd better step an' feed 'em right away, sir." She could hardly speak for sorrow and excitement, but the old man was diverted at once, and hobbled away with cheerful importance on his two canes. Then she looked round at the poor, stony little farm almost angrily. "He'd no natural turn for the sea, 'Lisha hadn't; but I might have kept him with me if the land was good for anything."

Elisha felt as if lie were in a dream, now that his great adventure was begun. He answered John Sykes's questions mechanically, and his head was a little dull and dazed. Then he began to fear that the slow plodding of the farm horses would make him too late for the steamboat, and with sudden satisfaction pulled out the great watch to see if there were still time enough to get to the landing. He was filled with remorse because it was impossible to remember whether he had thanked Ma'am Stover for her gift. It seemed like a thing of life and consciousness as he pushed it back into his tight pocket. John Sykes looked at him curiously. "Why, that's old Ma'am Stover's timepiece, ain't it? Lend it to ye, did she?"

"Gave it to me," answered Elisha proudly.

"You be careful of that watch," said the driver soberly; and Elisha nodded.

"Well, good-day to ye; be a stiddy lad," advised John Sykes, a few minutes afterward. "Don't start in too smart an' scare 'm up to Boston. Pride an' ambition was the downfall o' old Cole's dog. There, sonny, the bo't ain't nowheres in sight, for all your fidgetin'!"

They both smiled broadly at the humorous warning, and as the old wagon rattled away, Elisha stood a moment looking after it; then he went down to the wharf by winding ways among piles of decayed timber and disused lobster-pots. A small group of travelers and spectators had already assembled, and they stared at him in a way that made him feel separated from his kind, though some of them had come to see him depart. One unenlightened acquaintance inquired if Elisha were expecting friends by that morning's boat; and when he explained that he was going away himself, asked kindly whether it was to be as far as Bath. Elisha mentioned the word "Boston" with scorn and compassion, but he did not feel like discussing his brilliant prospects now, as he

had been more than ready to do the week before. Just then a deaf old woman asked for the time of day. She sat next him on the battered bench.

"Be you going up to Bath, dear?" she demanded suddenly; and he said yes. "Guess I'll stick to you, then, fur's you go; 't is kind o' blind in them big places." Elisha faintly nodded a meek but grudging assent; then, after a few moments, he boldly rose, tall umbrella in hand, and joined the talkative company of old and young men at the other side of the wharf. They proceeded to make very light of a person's going to Boston to enter upon his business career; but, after all, their thoughts were those of mingled respect and envy. Most of them had seen Boston, but no one save Elisha was going there that day to stay for a whole year. It made him feel like a city man.

The steamer whistled loud and hoarse before she came in sight, but presently the gay flags showed close by above the pointed spruces. Then she came jarring against the wharf, and the instant bustle and hurry, the strange faces of the passengers, and the loud rattle of freight going on board, were as confusing and exciting as if a small piece of Boston itself had been dropped into that quiet cove.

The people on the wharf shouted cheerful good-byes, to which the young traveler responded; then he seated himself well astern to enjoy the views, and felt as if he had made a thousand journeys. He bought a newspaper, and began to read it with much pride and a beating heart. The little old woman came and sat beside him, and talked straight on whether he listened or not, until he was afraid of what the other passengers might think, but nobody looked that way, and he could not find anything in the paper that he cared to read. Alone, but unfettered and aflame with courage; to himself he was not the boy who went away, but the proud man who one day would be coming home.

"Goin' to Boston, be ye?" asked the old lady for the third time; and it was still a pleasure to say yes, when the boat swung round, and there, far away on its gray and green pasture slope, with the dark evergreens standing back, were the low gray house, and the little square barn, and the lines of fence that shut in his home. He strained his eyes to see if any one were watching from the door. He had almost forgotten that they could see him still. He sprang to the boat's side: yes, his mother remembered; there was something white waving from the doorway. The whole landscape faded from his eyes except that faraway gray house; his heart leaped back with love and longing; he gazed and gazed, until a height of green forest came between and shut the picture out. Then the country boy went on alone to make his way in the wide world.

THE PAST

By Ellen Glasgow

(From *_Good Housekeeping_*)

I had no sooner entered the house than I knew something was wrong. Though I had never been in so splendid a place before--it was one of those big houses just off Fifth Avenue--I had a suspicion from the first that the magnificence covered a secret disturbance. I was always quick to receive impressions, and when the black iron doors swung together behind me, I felt as if I were shut inside of a prison.

When I gave my name and explained that I was the new secretary, I was delivered into the charge of an elderly lady's maid, who looked as if she had been crying. Without speaking a word, though she nodded kindly enough, she led me down the hall, and then up a flight of stairs at the back of the house to a pleasant bedroom in the third story. There was a great deal of sunshine, and the walls, which were painted a soft yellow, made the room very cheerful. It would be a comfortable place to sit in when I was not working, I thought, while the sad-faced maid stood watching me remove my wraps and hat.

"If you are not tired, Mrs. Vanderbridge would like to dictate a few letters," she said presently, and they were the first words she had spoken.

"I am not a bit tired. Will you take me to her?" One of the reasons, I knew, which had decided Mrs. Vanderbridge to engage me was the remarkable similarity of our handwriting. We were both Southerners, and though she was now famous on two continents for her beauty, I couldn't forget that she had got her early education at the little academy for young ladies in Fredericksburg. This was a bond of sympathy in my thoughts at least, and, heaven knows, I needed to remember it while I followed the maid down the narrow stairs and along the wide hall to the front of the house.

In looking back after a year, I can recall every detail of that first meeting. Though it was barely four o'clock, the electric lamps were turned on in the hall, and I can still see the mellow light that shone over the staircase and lay in pools on the old pink rugs, which were so soft and fine that I felt as if I were walking on flowers. I remember the sound of music from a room somewhere on the first floor, and the scent of lilies and hyacinths that drifted from the conservatory. I remember it all, every note of music, every whiff of fragrance; but most vividly I remember Mrs. Vanderbridge as she looked round, when the door

opened, from the wood fire into which she had been gazing. Her eyes caught me first. They were so wonderful that for a moment I couldn't see anything else; then I took in slowly the dark red of her hair, the clear pallor of her skin, and the long, flowing lines of her figure in a tea-gown of blue silk. There was a white bearskin rug under her feet, and while she stood there before the wood fire, she looked as if she had absorbed the beauty and colour of the house as a crystal vase absorbs the light. Only when she spoke to me, and I went nearer, did I detect the heaviness beneath her eyes and the nervous quiver of her mouth, which drooped a little at the corners. Tired and worn as she was, I never saw her afterwards--not even when she was dressed for the opera--look quite so lovely, so much like an exquisite flower, as she did on that first afternoon. When I knew her better, I discovered that she was a changeable beauty, there were days when all the colour seemed to go out of her, and she looked dull and haggard, but at her best no one I've ever seen could compare with her.

She asked me a few questions, and though she was pleasant and kind, I knew that she scarcely listened to my responses. While I sat down at the desk and dipped my pen into the ink, she flung herself on the couch before the fire with a movement which struck me as hopeless. I saw her feet tap the white fur rug, while she plucked nervously at the lace on the end of one of the gold-coloured sofa cushions. For an instant the thought flashed through my mind that she had been taking something--a drug of some sort--and that she was suffering now from the effects of it. Then she looked at me steadily, almost as if she were reading my thoughts, and I knew that I was wrong. Her large radiant eyes were as innocent as a child's.

She dictated a few notes--all declining invitations--and then, while I still waited pen in hand, she sat up on the couch with one of her quick movements, and said in a low voice, "I am not dining out to-night, Miss Wrenn. I am not well enough."

"I am sorry for that." It was all I could think of to say, for I did not understand why she should have told me.

"If you don't mind, I should like you to come down to dinner. There will be only Mr. Vanderbridge and myself."

"Of course I will come if you wish it." I couldn't very well refuse to do what she asked me, yet I told myself, while I answered, that if I had known she expected me to make one of the family, I should never, not even at twice the salary, have taken the place. It didn't take me a minute to go over my slender wardrobe in my mind and realize that I had nothing to wear that would look well enough.

"I can see you don't like it," she added after a moment, almost wistfully, "but it won't be often. It is only when we are dining alone."

This, I thought, was even queerer than the request--or command--for I knew from her tone, just as plainly as if she had told me in words, that she did not wish to dine alone with her husband.

"I am ready to help you in any way--in any way that I can," I replied, and I was so deeply moved by her appeal that my voice broke in spite of my effort to control it. After my lonely life I dare say I should have loved any one who really needed me, and from the first moment that I read the appeal in Mrs. Vanderbridge's face I felt that I was willing to work my fingers to the bone for her. Nothing that she asked of me was too much when she asked it in that voice, with that look.

"I am glad you are nice," she said, and for the first time she smiled--a charming, girlish smile with a hint of archness. "We shall get on beautifully, I know, because I can talk to you. My last secretary was English, and I frightened her almost to death whenever I tried to talk to her." Then her tone grew serious. "You won't mind dining with us. Roger--Mr. Vanderbridge--is the most charming man in the world."

"Is that his picture?"

"Yes, the one in the Florentine frame. The other is my brother. Do you think we are alike?"

"Since you've told me, I notice a likeness." Already I had picked up the Florentine frame from the desk, and was eagerly searching the features of Mr. Vanderbridge. It was an arresting face, dark, thoughtful, strangely appealing, and picturesque--though this may have been due, of course, to the photographer. The more I looked at it, the more there grew upon me an uncanny feeling of familiarity; but not until the next day, while I was still trying to account for the impression that I had seen the picture before, did there flash into my mind the memory of an old portrait of a Florentine nobleman in a loan collection last winter. I can't remember the name of the painter--I am not sure that it was known--but this photograph might have been taken from the painting. There was the same imaginative sadness in both faces, the same haunting beauty of feature, and one surmised that there must be the same rich darkness of colouring. The only striking difference was that the man in the photograph looked much older than the original of the portrait, and I remembered that the lady who had engaged me was the second wife of Mr. Vanderbridge and some ten or fifteen years younger, I had heard, than her husband.

"Have you ever seen a more wonderful face?" asked Mrs. Vanderbridge. "Doesn't he look as if he might have been painted by Titian?"

"Is he really so handsome as that?"

"He is a little older and sadder, that is all. When we were married it was exactly like him." For an instant she hesitated and then broke out almost bitterly, "Isn't that a face any woman might fall in love with, a face any woman--living or dead--would not be willing to give up?"

Poor child, I could see that she was overwrought and needed some one to talk to, but it seemed queer to me that she should speak so frankly to a stranger. I wondered why any one so rich and so beautiful should ever be unhappy--for I had been schooled by poverty to believe that money is the first essential of happiness--and yet her unhappiness was as evident as her beauty, or the luxury that enveloped her. At that instant I felt that I hated Mr. Vanderbridge, for whatever the secret tragedy of their marriage might be, I instinctively knew that the fault was not on the side of the wife. She was as sweet and winning as if she were still the reigning beauty in the academy for young ladies. I knew with a knowledge deeper than any conviction that she was not to blame, and if she wasn't to blame, then who under heaven could be at fault except her husband?

In a few minutes a friend came in to tea, and I went upstairs to my room, and unpacked the blue taffeta dress I had bought for my sister's wedding. I was still doubtfully regarding it when there was a knock at my door, and the maid with the sad face came in to bring me a pot of tea. After she had placed the tray on the table, she stood nervously twisting a napkin in her hands while she waited for me to leave my unpacking and sit down in the easy chair she had drawn up under the lamp.

"How do you think Mrs. Vanderbridge is looking?" she asked abruptly in a voice, that held a breathless note of suspense. Her nervousness and the queer look in her face made me stare at her sharply. This was a house, I was beginning to feel, where everybody, from the mistress down, wanted to question me. Even the silent maid had found voice for interrogation.

"I think her the loveliest person I've ever seen," I answered after a moment's hesitation. There couldn't be any harm in telling her how much I admired her mistress.

"Yes, she is lovely--every one thinks so--and her nature is as sweet as her face." She was becoming loquacious. "I have never had a lady who was so sweet and kind. She hasn't always been rich, and that may be the reason she never seems to grow hard and selfish, the reason she spends so much of her life thinking of other people. It's been six years now, ever since her marriage, that I've lived with her, and in all that time I've never had a cross word from her."

"One can see that. With everything she has she ought to be as happy as the day is long."

"She ought to be." Her voice dropped, and I saw her glance suspiciously

at the door, which she had closed when she entered. "She ought to be, but she isn't. I have never seen any one so unhappy as she has been of late--ever since last summer. I suppose I oughtn't to talk about it, but I've kept it to myself so long that I feel as if it was killing me. If she was my own sister, I couldn't be any fonder of her, and yet I have to see her suffer day after day, and not say a word--not even to her. She isn't the sort of lady you could speak to about a thing like that."

She broke down, and dropping on the rug at my feet, hid her face in her hands. It was plain that she was suffering acutely, and while I patted her shoulder, I thought what a wonderful mistress Mrs. Vanderbridge must be to have attached a servant to her so strongly.

"You must remember that I am a stranger in the house, that I scarcely know her, that I've never even seen her husband," I said warningly, for I've always avoided, as far as possible, the confidences of servants.

"But you look as if you could be trusted." The maid's nerves, as well as the mistress's, were on edge, I could see. "And she needs somebody who can help her. She needs a real friend--somebody who will stand by her no matter what happens."

Again, as in the room downstairs, there flashed through my mind the suspicion that I had got into a place where people took drugs or drink--or were all out of their minds. I had heard of such houses.

"How can I help her? She won't confide in me, and even if she did, what could I do for her?"

"You can stand by and watch. You can come between her and harm--if you see it." She had risen from the floor and stood wiping her reddened eyes on the napkin. "I don't know what it is, but I know it is there. I feel it even when I can't see it."

Yes, they were all out of their minds; there couldn't be any other explanation. The whole episode was incredible. It was the kind of thing, I kept telling myself, that did not happen. Even in a book nobody could believe it.

"But her husband? He is the one who must protect her."

She gave me a blighting look. "He would if he could. He isn't to blame--you mustn't think that. He is one of the best men in the world, but he can't help her. He can't help her because he doesn't know. He doesn't see it."

A bell rang somewhere, and catching up the tea-tray, she paused just long enough to throw me a pleading word, "Stand between her and harm, if you see it."

When she had gone I locked the door after her, and turned on all the lights in the room. Was there really a tragic mystery in the house, or were they all mad, as I had first imagined? The feeling of apprehension, of vague uneasiness, which had come to me when I entered the iron doors, swept over me in a wave while I sat there in the soft glow of the shaded electric light. Something was wrong. Somebody was making that lovely woman unhappy, and who, in the name of reason, could this somebody be except her husband? Yet the maid had spoken of him as "one of the best men in the world," and it was impossible to doubt the tearful sincerity of her voice. Well, the riddle was too much for me. I gave it up at last with a sigh--dreading the hour that would call the downstairs to meet Mr. Vanderbridge. I felt in every nerve and fibre of my body that I should hate him the moment I looked at him.

But at eight o'clock, when I went reluctantly downstairs, I had a surprise. Nothing could have been kinder than the way Mr. Vanderbridge greeted me, and I could tell as soon as I met his eyes that there wasn't anything vicious or violent in his nature. He reminded me more than ever of the portrait in the loan collection, and though he was so much older than the Florentine nobleman, he had the same thoughtful look. Of course I am not an artist, but I have always tried, in my way, to be a reader of personality; and it didn't take a particularly keen observer to discern the character and intellect in Mr. Vanderbridge's face. Even now I remember it as the noblest face I have ever seen; and unless I had possessed at least a shade of penetration, I doubt if I should have detected the melancholy. For it was only when he was thinking deeply that this sadness seemed to spread like a veil over his features. At other times he was cheerful and even gay in his manner; and his rich dark eyes would light up now and then with irrepressible humour. From the way he looked at his wife I could tell that there was no lack of love or tenderness on his side any more than there was on hers. It was obvious that he was still as much in love with her as he had been before his marriage, and my immediate perception of this only deepened the mystery that enveloped them. If the fault wasn't his and wasn't hers, then who was responsible for the shadow that hung over the house?

For the shadow was there. I could feel it, vague and dark, while we talked about the war and the remote possibilities of peace in the spring. Mrs. Vanderbridge looked young and lovely in her gown of white satin with pearls on her bosom, but her violet eyes were almost black in the candlelight, and I had a curious feeling that this blackness was the colour of thought. Something troubled her to despair, yet I was as positive as I could be of anything I had ever been told that she had breathed no word of this anxiety or distress to her husband. Devoted as they were, a nameless dread, fear, or apprehension divided them. It was the thing I had felt from the moment I entered the house; the thing I had heard in the tearful voice of the maid. One could scarcely call it horror, because it was too vague, too impalpable, for so vivid a name;

yet, after all these quiet months, horror is the only word I can think of that in any way expresses the emotion which pervaded the house.

I had never seen so beautiful a dinner table, and I was gazing with pleasure at the damask and glass and silver--there was a silver basket of chrysanthemums, I remember, in the centre of the table--when I noticed a nervous movement of Mrs. Vanderbridge's head, and saw her glance hastily toward the door and the staircase beyond. We had been talking animatedly, and as Mrs. Vanderbridge turned away, I had just made a remark to her husband, who appeared to have fallen into a sudden fit of abstraction, and was gazing thoughtfully over his soup-plate at the white and yellow chrysanthemums. It occurred to me, while I watched him, that he was probably absorbed in some financial problem, and I regretted that I had been so careless as to speak to him. To my surprise, however, he replied immediately in a natural tone, and I saw, or imagined that I saw, Mrs. Vanderbridge throw me a glance of gratitude and relief. I can't remember what we were talking about, but I recall perfectly that the conversation kept up pleasantly, without a break, until dinner was almost half over. The roast had been served, and I was in the act of helping myself to potatoes, when I became aware that Mr. Vanderbridge had again fallen into his reverie. This time he scarcely seemed to hear his wife's voice when she spoke to him, and I watched the sadness cloud his face while he continued to stare straight ahead of him with a look that was almost yearning in its intensity.

Again I saw Mrs. Vanderbridge, with her nervous gesture, glance in the direction of the hall, and to my amazement, as she did so, a woman's figure glided noiselessly over the old Persian rug at the door, and entered the dining-room. I was wondering why no one spoke to her, why she spoke to no one, when I saw her sink into a chair on the other side of Mr. Vanderbridge and unfold her napkin. She was quite young, younger even than Mrs. Vanderbridge, and though she was not really beautiful, she was the most graceful creature I had ever imagined. Her dress was of gray stuff, softer and more clinging than silk, and of a peculiar misty texture and colour, and her parted hair lay like twilight on either side of her forehead. She was not like any one I had ever seen before--she appeared so much frailer, so much more elusive, as if she would vanish if you touched her. I can't describe, even months afterwards, the singular way in which she attracted and repelled me.

At first I glanced inquiringly at Mrs. Vanderbridge, hoping that she would introduce me, but she went on talking rapidly in an intense, quivering voice, without noticing the presence of her guest by so much as the lifting of her eyelashes. Mr. Vanderbridge still sat there, silent and detached, and all the time the eyes of the stranger--starry eyes with a mist over them--looked straight through me at the tapestry on the wall. I knew she didn't see me and that it wouldn't have made the slightest difference to her if she had seen me. In spite of her grace and her girlishness I did not like her, and I felt that this aversion

was not on my side alone. I do not know how I received the impression that she hated Mrs. Vanderbridge--never once had she glanced in her direction--yet I was aware from the moment of her entrance, that she was bristling with animosity, though animosity is too strong a word for the resentful spite, like the jealous rage of a spoiled child, which gleamed now and then in her eyes. I couldn't think of her as wicked any more than I could think of a bad child as wicked. She was merely wilful and undisciplined and--I hardly know how to convey what I mean--elfish.

After her entrance the dinner dragged on heavily. Mrs. Vanderbridge still kept up her nervous chatter, but nobody listened, for I was too embarrassed to pay any attention to what she said, and Mr. Vanderbridge had never recovered from his abstraction. He was like a man in a dream, not observing a thing that happened before him, while the strange woman sat there in the candlelight with her curious look of vagueness and unreality. To my astonishment not even the servants appeared to notice her, and though she had unfolded her napkin when she sat down, she wasn't served with either the roast or the salad. Once or twice, particularly when a course was served, I glanced at Mrs. Vanderbridge to see if she would rectify the mistake, but she kept her gaze fixed on her plate. It was just as if there were a conspiracy to ignore the presence of the stranger, though she had been, from the moment of her entrance, the dominant figure at the table. You tried to pretend she wasn't there, and yet you knew--you knew vividly that she was gazing insolently straight through you.

The dinner lasted, it seemed, for hours, and you may imagine my relief when at last Mrs. Vanderbridge rose and led the way back into the drawing-room. At first I thought the stranger would follow us, but when I glanced round from the hall she was still sitting there beside Mr. Vanderbridge, who was smoking a cigar with his coffee.

"Usually he takes his coffee with me," said Mrs. Vanderbridge, "but tonight he has things to think over."

"I thought he seemed absent-minded."

"You noticed it, then?" She turned to me with her straightforward glance. "I always wonder how much strangers notice. He hasn't been well of late, and he has these spells of depression. Nerves are dreadful things, aren't they?"

I laughed. "So I've heard, but I've never been able to afford them."

"Well, they do cost a great deal, don't they?" She had a trick of ending her sentences with a question. "I hope your room is comfortable, and that you don't feel timid about being alone on that floor. If you haven't nerves, you can't get nervous, can you?"

"No, I can't get nervous." Yet while I spoke, I was conscious of a shiver deep down in me, as if my senses reacted again to the dread that permeated the atmosphere.

As soon as I could, I escaped to my room, and I was sitting there over a book, when the maid--her name was Hopkins, I had discovered--came in on the pretext of inquiring if I had everything I needed. One of the innumerable servants had already turned down my bed, so when Hopkins appeared at the door, I suspected at once that there was a hidden motive underlying her ostensible purpose.

"Mrs. Vanderbridge told me to look after you," she began. "She is afraid you will be lonely until you learn the way of things."

"No, I'm not lonely," I answered. "I've never had time to be lonely."

"I used to be like that; but time hangs heavy on my hands now. That's why I've taken to knitting." She held out a gray yarn muffler. "I had an operation a year ago, and since then Mrs. Vanderbridge has had another maid--a French one--to sit up for her at night and undress her. She is always so fearful of overtaking us, though there isn't really enough work for two lady's-maids, because she is so thoughtful that she never gives any trouble if she can help it."

"It must be nice to be rich," I said idly, as I turned a page of my book. Then I added almost before I realized what I was saying, "The other lady doesn't look as if she had so much money."

Her face turned paler if that were possible, and for a minute I thought she was going to faint. "The other lady?"

"I mean the one who came down late to dinner--the one in the gray dress. She wore no jewels, and her dress wasn't low in the neck."

"Then you saw her?" There was a curious flicker in her face as if her pallor came and went.

"We were at the table when she came in. Has Mr. Vanderbridge a secretary who lives in the house?"

"No, he hasn't a secretary except at his office. When he wants one at the house, he telephones to his office."

"I wondered why she came, for she didn't eat any dinner, and nobody spoke to her--not even Mr. Vanderbridge."

"Oh, he never speaks to her. Thank God, it hasn't come to that yet."

"Then why does she come? It must be dreadful to be treated like that,

and before the servants, too. Does she come often?"

"There are months and months when she doesn't. I can always tell by the way Mrs. Vanderbridge picks up. You wouldn't know her, she is so full of life--the very picture of happiness. Then one evening she--the Other One, I mean--comes back again, just as she did tonight, just as she did last summer, and it all begins over from the beginning."

"But can't they keep her out--the Other One? Why do they let her in?"

"Mrs. Vanderbridge tries hard. She tries all she can every minute. You saw her tonight?"

"And Mr. Vanderbridge? Can't he help her?"

She shook her head with an ominous gesture. "He doesn't know."

"He doesn't know she is there? Why, she was close by him. She never took her eyes off him except when she was staring through me at the wall."

"Oh, he knows she is there, but not in that way. He doesn't know that any one else knows."

I gave it up, and after a minute she said in a suppressed voice, "It seems strange that you should have seen her. I never have."

"But you know all about her."

"I know and I don't know. Mrs. Vanderbridge lets things drop sometimes--she gets ill and feverish very easily--but she never tells me anything outright. She isn't that sort."

"Haven't the servants told you about her--the Other One?"

At this, I thought, she seemed startled. "Oh, they don't know anything to tell. They feel that something is wrong; that is why they never stay longer than a week or two--we've had eight butlers since autumn--but they never see what it is."

She stooped to pick up the ball of yarn which had rolled under my chair. "If the time ever comes when you can stand between them, you will do it?" she asked.

"Between Mrs. Vanderbridge and the Other One?"

Her look answered me.

"You think, then, that she means harm to her?"

"I don't know. Nobody knows--but she is killing her."

The clock struck ten, and I returned to my book with a yawn, while Hopkins gathered up her work and went out, after wishing me a formal good night. The odd part about our secret conferences was that as soon as they were over, we began to pretend so elaborately to each other that they had never been.

"I'll tell Mrs. Vanderbridge that you are very comfortable," was the last remark Hopkins made before she sidled out of the door and left me alone with the mystery. It was one of those situations--I am obliged to repeat this over and over--that was too preposterous for me to believe even while I was surrounded and overwhelmed by its reality. I didn't dare face what I thought, I didn't dare face even what I felt; but I went to bed shivering in a warm room, while I resolved passionately that if the chance ever came to me I would stand between Mrs. Vanderbridge and this unknown evil that threatened her.

In the morning Mrs. Vanderbridge went out shopping, and I did not see her until the evening, when she passed me on the staircase as she was going out to dinner and the opera. She was radiant in blue velvet, with diamonds in her hair and at her throat, and I wondered again how any one so lovely could ever be troubled.

"I hope you had a pleasant day, Miss Wrenn," she said kindly. "I have been too busy to get off any letters, but tomorrow we shall begin early." Then, as if from an afterthought, she looked back and added, "There are some new novels in my sitting-room. You might care to look over them."

When she had gone, I went upstairs to the sitting-room and turned over the books, but I couldn't, to save my life, force an interest in printed romances after meeting Mrs. Vanderbridge and remembering the mystery that surrounded her. I wondered if "the Other One," as Hopkins called her, lived in the house, and I was still wondering this when the maid came in and began putting the table to rights.

"Do they dine out often?" I asked.

"They used to, but since Mr. Vanderbridge hasn't been so well, Mrs. Vanderbridge doesn't like to go without him. She only went tonight because he begged her to."

She had barely finished speaking when the door opened, and Mr. Vanderbridge came in and sat down in one of the big velvet chairs before the wood fire. He had not noticed us, for one of his moods was upon him, and I was about to slip out as noiselessly as I could when I saw that the Other One was standing in the patch of firelight on the hearth rug. I had not seen her come in, and Hopkins evidently was still unaware of

her presence, for while I was watching, I saw the maid turn towards her with a fresh log for the fire. At the moment it occurred to me that Hopkins must be either blind or drunk, for without hesitating in her advance, she moved on the stranger, holding the huge hickory log out in front of her. Then, before I could utter a sound or stretch out a hand to stop her, I saw her walk straight through the gray figure and carefully place the log on the andirons.

So she isn't real, after all, she is merely a phantom, I found myself thinking, as I fled from the room, and hurried along the hall to the staircase. She is only a ghost, and nobody believes in ghosts any longer. She is something that I know doesn't exist, yet even, though she can't possibly be, I can swear that I have seen her. My nerves were so shaken by the discovery that as soon as I reached my room I sank in a heap on the rug, and it was here that Hopkins found me a little later when she came to bring me an extra blanket.

"You looked so upset I thought you might have seen something," she said. "Did anything happen while you were in the room?"

"She was there all the time--every blessed minute. You walked right through her when you put the log on the fire. Is it possible that you didn't see her?"

"No, I didn't see anything out of the way." She was plainly frightened. "Where was she standing?"

"On the hearthrug in front of Mr. Vanderbridge. To reach the fire you had to walk straight through her, for she didn't move. She didn't give way an inch."

"Oh, she never gives way. She never gives way living or dead."

This was more than human nature could stand. "In Heaven's name," I cried irritably, "who is she?"

"Don't you know?" She appeared genuinely surprised. "Why, she is the other Mrs. Vanderbridge. She died fifteen years ago, just a year after they were married, and people say a scandal was hushed up about her, which he never knew. She isn't a good sort, that's what I think of her, though they say he almost worshipped her."

"And she still has this hold on him?"

"He can't shake it off, that's what's the matter with him, and if it goes on, he will end his days in an asylum. You see, she was very young, scarcely more than a girl, and he got the idea in his head that it was marrying him that killed her. If you want to know what I think, I believe she puts it there for a purpose."

"You mean--?" I was so completely at sea that I couldn't frame a rational question.

"I mean she haunts him purposely in order to drive him out of his mind. She was always that sort, jealous and exacting, the kind that clutches and strangles a man, and I've often thought, though I've no head for speculation, that we carry into the next world the traits and feelings that have got the better of us in this one. It seems to me only common sense to believe that we're obliged to work them off somewhere until we are free of them. That is the way my first lady used to talk anyhow, and I've never found anybody that could give me a more sensible idea."

"And isn't there any way to stop it? What has Mrs. Vanderbridge done?"

"Oh, she can't do anything now. It has got beyond her, though she has had doctor after doctor, and tried everything she could think of. But, you see, she is handicapped because she can't mention it to her husband. He doesn't know that she knows."

"And she won't tell him?"

"She is the sort that would die first--just the opposite from the Other One--for she leaves him free, she never clutches and strangles. It isn't her way." For a moment she hesitated, and then added grimly--"I've wondered if you could do anything?"

"If I could? Why, I am a perfect stranger to them all."

"That's why I've been thinking it. Now, if you could corner her some day--the Other One--and tell her up and down to her face what you think of her."

The idea was so ludicrous that it made me laugh in spite of my shaken nerves. "They would fancy me out of my wits! Imagine stopping an apparition and telling it what you think of it!"

"Then you might try talking it over with Mrs. Vanderbridge. It would help her to know that you see her also."

But the next morning, when I went down to Mrs. Vanderbridge's room, I found that she was too ill to see me. At noon a trained nurse came on the case, and for a week we took our meals together in the morning-room upstairs. She appeared competent enough, but I am sure that she didn't so much as suspect that there was anything wrong in the house except the influenza which had attacked Mrs. Vanderbridge the night of the opera. Never once during that week did I catch a glimpse of the Other One, though I felt her presence whenever I left my room and passed through the hall below. I knew all the time as well as if I had seen her that

she was hidden there, watching, watching--

At the end of the week Mrs. Vanderbridge sent for me to write some letters, and when I went into her room, I found her lying on the couch with a tea table in front of her. She asked me to make the tea because she was still so weak, and I saw that she looked flushed and feverish, and that her eyes were unnaturally large and bright. I hoped she wouldn't talk to me, because people in that state are apt to talk too much and then to blame the listener; but I had hardly taken my seat at the tea table before she said in a hoarse voice--the cold had settled on her chest:

"Miss Wrenn, I have wanted to ask you ever since the other evening--did you--did you see anything unusual at dinner? From your face when you came out I thought--I thought--"

I met this squarely. "That I might have? Yes, I did see something."

"You saw her?"

"I saw a woman come in and sit down at the table, and I wondered why no one served her. I saw her quite distinctly."

"A small woman, thin and pale, in a grey dress?"

"She was so vague and--and misty, you know what I mean, that it is hard to describe her; but I should know her again anywhere. She wore her hair parted and drawn down over her ears. It was very dark and fine--as fine as spun silk."

We were speaking in low voices, and unconsciously we had moved closer together while my idle hands left the tea things.

"Then you know," she said earnestly, "that she really comes--that I am not out of my mind--that it is not an hallucination?"

"I know that I saw her. I would swear to it. But doesn't Mr. Vanderbridge see her also?"

"Not as we see her. He thinks that she is in his mind only." Then after an uncomfortable silence, she added suddenly, "She is really a thought, you know. She is his thought of her--but he doesn't know that she is visible to the rest of us."

"And he brings her back by thinking of her?"

She leaned nearer while a quiver passed over her features and the flush deepened in her cheeks. "That is the only way she comes back--the only way she has the power to come back--as a thought. There are months and

months when she leaves us in peace because he is thinking of other things, but of late, since his illness, she has been with him almost constantly." A sob broke from her, and she buried her face in her hands. "I suppose she is always trying to come--only she is too vague--and she hasn't any form that we can see except when he thinks of her as she used to look when she was alive. His thought of her is like that, hurt and tragic and revengeful. You see, he feels that he ruined her life because she died when the child was coming--a month before it would have been born."

"And if he were to see her differently, would she change? Would she cease to be revengeful if he stopped thinking her so?"

"God only knows. I've wondered and wondered how I might move her to pity."

"Then you feel that she is really there? That she exists outside of his mind?"

"How can I tell? What do any of us know of the world beyond? She exists as much as I exist to you or you to me. Isn't thought all that there is--all that we know?"

This was deeper than I could follow; but in order not to appear stupid, I murmured sympathetically.

"And does she make him unhappy when she comes?"

"She is killing him--and me. I believe that is why she does it."

"Are you sure that she could stay away? When he thinks of her isn't she obliged to come back?"

"Oh, I've asked that question over and over! In spite of his calling her so unconsciously, I believe she comes of her own will. I have always the feeling--it has never left me for an instant--that she could appear differently if she would. I have studied her for years until I know her like a book, and though she is only an apparition, I am perfectly positive that she wills evil to us both. Don't you think he would change that if he could? Don't you think he would make her kind instead of vindictive if he had the power?"

"But if he could remember her as loving and tender?"

"I don't know. I give it up--but it is killing me."

It was killing her. As the days passed I began to realize that she had spoken the truth. I watched her bloom fade slowly and her lovely features grow pinched and thin like the features of a starved person.

The harder she fought the apparition, the more I saw that the battle was a losing one, and that she was only wasting her strength. So impalpable yet so pervasive was the enemy that it was like fighting a poisonous odour. There was nothing to wrestle with, and yet there was everything. The struggle was wearing her out--was, as she had said, actually "killing her"; but the physician who dosed her daily with drugs--there was need now of a physician--had not the faintest idea of the malady he was treating. In those dreadful days I think that even Mr. Vanderbridge hadn't a suspicion of the truth. The past was with him so constantly--he was so steeped in the memories of it that the present was scarcely more than a dream to him. It was, you see, a reversal of the natural order of things; the thought had become more vivid to his perceptions than any object. The phantom had been victorious so far, and he was like a man recovering from the effects of a narcotic. He was only half awake, only half alive to the events through which he lived and the people who surrounded him. Oh, I realize that I am telling my story badly!--that I am slurring over the significant interludes! My mind has dealt so long with external details that I have almost forgotten the words that express invisible things. Though the phantom in the house was more real to me than the bread I ate or the floor on which I trod, I can give you no impression of the atmosphere in which we lived day after day--of the suspense, of the dread of something we could not define, of the brooding horror that seemed to lurk in the shadows of the firelight, of the feeling always, day and night, that some unseen person was watching us. How Mrs. Vanderbridge stood it without losing her mind, I have never known; and even now I am not sure that she could have kept her reason if the end had not come when it did. That I accidentally brought it about is one of the things in my life I am most thankful to remember.

It was an afternoon in late winter, and I had just come up from luncheon, when Mrs. Vanderbridge asked me to empty an old desk in one of the upstairs rooms. "I am sending all the furniture in that room away," she said, "it was bought in a bad period, and I want to clear it out and make room for the lovely things we picked up in Italy. There is nothing in the desk worth saving except some old letters from Mr. Vanderbridge's mother before her marriage."

I was glad that she could think of anything so practical as furniture, and it was with relief that I followed her into the dim, rather musty room over the library, where the windows were all tightly closed. Years ago, Hopkins had once told me, the first Mrs. Vanderbridge had used this room for a while, and after her death her husband had been in the habit of shutting himself up alone here in the evenings. This, I inferred, was the secret reason why my employer was sending the furniture away. She had resolved to clear the house of every association with the past.

For a few minutes we sorted the letters in the drawers of the desk, and then, as I expected, Mrs. Vanderbridge became suddenly bored by the task she had undertaken. She was subject to these nervous reactions, and I

was prepared for them even when they seized her so spasmodically. I remember that she was in the very act of glancing over an old letter when she rose impatiently, tossed it into the fire unread, and picked up a magazine she had thrown down on a chair.

"Go over them by yourself, Miss Wrenn," she said, and it was characteristic of her nature that she should assume my trustworthiness. "If anything seems worth saving you can file it--but I'd rather die than have to wade through all this."

They were mostly personal letters, and while I went on, carefully filing them, I thought how absurd it was of people to preserve so many papers that were entirely without value. Mr. Vanderbridge I had imagined to be a methodical man, and yet the disorder of the desk produced a painful effect on my systematic temperament. The drawers were filled with letters evidently unsorted, for now and then I came upon a mass of business receipts and acknowledgements crammed in among wedding invitations or letters from some elderly lady, who wrote interminable pale epistles in the finest and most feminine of Italian hands. That a man of Mr. Vanderbridge's wealth and position should have been so careless about his correspondence amazed me until I recalled the dark hints Hopkins had dropped in some of her midnight conversations. Was it possible that he had actually lost his reason for months after the death of his first wife, during that year when he had shut himself alone with her memory? The question was still in my mind when my eyes fell on the envelope in my hand, and I saw that it was addressed to Mrs. Roger Vanderbridge. So this explained, in a measure at least, the carelessness and the disorder! The desk was not his, but hers, and after her death he had used it only during those desperate months when he barely opened a letter. What he had done in those long evenings when he sat alone here it was beyond me to imagine. Was it any wonder that the brooding should have permanently unbalanced his mind?

At the end of an hour I had sorted and filed the papers, with the intention of asking Mrs. Vanderbridge if she wished me to destroy the ones that seemed to be unimportant. The letters she had instructed me to keep had not come to my hand, and I was about to give up the search for them, when, in shaking the lock of one of the drawers, the door of a secret compartment fell open and I discovered a dark object, which crumbled and dropped apart when I touched it. Bending nearer, I saw that the crumbled mass had once been a bunch of flowers, and that a streamer of purple ribbon still held together the frail structure of wire and stems. In this drawer some one had hidden a sacred treasure, and moved by a sense of romance and adventure, I gathered the dust tenderly in tissue paper, and prepared to take it downstairs to Mrs. Vanderbridge. It was not until then that some letters tied loosely together with a silver cord caught my eyes, and while I picked them up, I remember thinking that they must be the ones for which I had been looking so long. Then, as the cord broke in my grasp and I gathered the letters

from the lid of the desk, a word or two flashed back at me through the torn edges of the envelopes, and I realized that they were love letters written, I surmised, some fifteen years ago, by Mr. Vanderbridge to his first wife.

"It may hurt her to see them," I thought, "but I don't dare destroy them. There is nothing I can do except give them to her."

As I left the room, carrying the letters and the ashes of the flowers, the idea of taking them to the husband instead of to the wife, flashed through my mind. Then--I think it was some jealous feeling about the phantom that decided me--I quickened my steps to a run down the staircase.

"They would bring her back. He would think of her more than ever," I told myself, "so he shall never see them. He shall never see them if I can prevent it." I believe it occurred to me that Mrs. Vanderbridge would be generous enough to give them to him--she was capable of rising above her jealousy, I knew--but I determined that she shouldn't do it until I had reasoned it out with her. "If anything on earth would bring back the Other One for good, it would be his seeing these old letters," I repeated as I hastened down the hall.

Mrs. Vanderbridge was lying on the couch before the fire, and I noticed at once that she had been crying. The drawn look in her sweet face went to my heart, and I felt that I would do anything in the world to comfort her. Though she had a book in her hand, I could see that she had not been reading. The electric lamp on the table by her side was already lighted, leaving the rest of the room in shadow, for it was a grey day with a biting edge of snow in the air. It was all very charming in the soft light; but as soon as I entered I had a feeling of oppression that made me want to run out into the wind. If you have ever lived in a haunted house--a house pervaded by an unforgettable past--you will understand the sensation of melancholy that crept over me the minute the shadows began to fall. It was not in myself--of this I am sure, for I have naturally a cheerful temperament--it was in the space that surrounded us and the air we breathed.

I explained to her about the letters, and then, kneeling on the rug in front of her, I emptied the dust of the flowers into the fire. There was, though I hate to confess it, a vindictive pleasure in watching it melt into the flames and at the moment I believe I could have burned the apparition as thankfully. The more I saw of the Other One, the more I found myself accepting Hopkins' judgment of her. Yes, her behaviour, living and dead, proved that she was not "a good sort."

My eyes were still on the flames when a sound from Mrs. Vanderbridge--half a sigh, half a sob--made me turn quickly and look up at her.

"But this isn't his handwriting," she said in a puzzled tone. "They are love letters, and they are to her--but they are not from him." For a moment or two she was silent, and I heard the pages rustle in her hands as she turned them impatiently. "They are not from him," she repeated presently, with an exultant ring in her voice. "They are written after her marriage, but they are from another man." She was as sternly tragic as an avenging fate. "She wasn't faithful to him while she lived. She wasn't faithful to him even while he was hers--"

With a spring I had risen from my knees and was bending over her.

"Then you can save him from her. You can win him back? You have only to show him the letters, and he will believe."

"Yes, I have only to show him the letters." She was looking beyond me into the dusky shadows of the firelight, as if she saw the Other One standing there. "I have only to show him the letters," I knew now that she was not speaking to me, "and he will believe."

"Her power over him will be broken," I cried out. "He will think of her differently. Oh, don't you see? Can't you see? It is the only way to make him think of her differently. It is the only way to break for ever the thought that draws her back to him."

"Yes, I see, it is the only way," she said slowly; and the words were still on her lips when the door opened and Mr. Vanderbridge entered.

"I came for a cup of tea," he began, and added with playful tenderness, "What is the only way?"

It was the crucial moment, I realized--it was the hour of destiny for these two--and while he sank wearily into a chair, I looked imploringly at his wife and then at the letters lying scattered loosely about her. If I had had my will I should have flung them at him with a violence which would have startled him out of his lethargy. Violence, I felt was what he needed--violence, a storm, tears, reproaches--all the things he would never get from his wife.

For a minute or two she sat there, with the letters before her, and watched him with her thoughtful and tender gaze. I knew from her face, so lovely and yet so sad, that she was looking again at invisible things--at the soul of the man she loved, not at the body. She saw him, detached and spiritualized, and she saw also the Other One--for while we waited I became slowly aware of the apparition in the firelight--of the white face and the cloudy hair and the look of animosity and bitterness in the eyes. Never before had I been so profoundly convinced of the malignant will veiled by that thin figure. It was as if the visible form were only a spiral of grey smoke covering a sinister purpose.

"The only way," said Mrs. Vanderbridge, "is to fight fairly even when one fights evil." Her voice was like a bell, and as she spoke, she rose from the couch and stood there in her glowing beauty confronting the pale ghost of the past. There was a light about her that was almost unearthly--the light of triumph. The radiance of it blinded me for an instant. It was like a flame, clearing the atmosphere of all that was evil, of all that was poisonous and deadly. She was looking directly at the phantom, and there was no hate in her voice--there was only a great pity, a great sorrow and sweetness.

"I can't fight you that way," she said, and I knew that for the first time she had swept aside subterfuge and evasion, and was speaking straight to the presence before her. "After all, you are dead and I am living, and I cannot fight you that way. I give up everything. I give him back to you. Nothing is mine that I cannot win and keep fairly. Nothing is mine that belongs really to you."

Then, while Mr. Vanderbridge rose, with a start of fear, and came towards her, she bent quickly, and flung the letters into the fire. When he would have stooped to gather the unburned pages, her lovely flowing body curved between his hands and the flames; and so transparent, so ethereal she looked, that I saw--or imagined that I saw--the firelight shine through her. "The only way, my dear, is the right way," she said softly.

The next instant--I don't know to this day how or when it began--I was aware that the apparition had drawn nearer, and that the dread and fear, the evil purpose, were no longer a part of her. I saw her clearly for a moment--saw her as I had never seen her before--young and gentle and--yes, this is the only word for it--loving. It was just as if a curse had turned into a blessing, for, while she stood there, I had a curious sensation of being enfolded in a kind of spiritual glow and comfort--only words are useless to describe the feeling because it wasn't in the least like anything else I had ever known in my life. It was light without heat, glow without light--and yet it was none of these things. The nearest I can come to it is to call it a sense of blessedness--of blessedness that made you at peace with everything you had once hated.

Not until afterwards did I realize that it was the victory of good over evil. Not until afterwards did I discover that Mrs. Vanderbridge had triumphed over the past in the only way that she could triumph. She had won, not by resisting, but by accepting, not by violence, but by gentleness, not by grasping, but by renouncing. Oh, long, long afterwards, I knew that she had robbed the phantom of power over her by robbing it of hatred. She had changed the thought of the past, in that lay her victory.

At the moment I did not understand this. I did not understand it even when I looked again for the apparition in the firelight, and saw that it had vanished. There was nothing there--nothing except the pleasant flicker of light and shadow on the old Persian rug.

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *The Best Short Stories of 1921*, by Various

IN GRANADA.,

by Madelene Yale Wynne

‘Pepita,’ said I, ‘do tell me a story.’

‘Señora Maria Madalena, would you like to hear about Seraphita? She was born in Granada. That was one hundred years ago.

‘She was born in a high place; her mother was of a great family, and her father was great too, but he was very wild, and Seraphita was the prettiest thing that ever was born in Granada; everybody said so, and her mother used to think that the sun rose on the east side of her little bed, and set on the west.

‘The days ran merrily, and the father felt so happy that he went all the time to the bull-fights, and threw even money, yes, not only cigars but real money, to the torreadors. And all was beautiful till Seraphita was four months old; then she died. She had been very ill, so ill that her father did not go to the bull-fights for one whole week, and he paid for a great ceremony in the church, and everybody said, “Now Seraphita will get well,” for he had paid more than one hundred pieces of gold for prayers. But Seraphita died, and her mother had so much heart-grief that she lost her wits. For one whole day she sat, cold and still, without a tear, and then she cried aloud and began to tear out handfuls of her smooth black hair, and it was a great pity, for her hair was black and long, and glistened like satin--she was called the Satin-haired. But she forgot how beautiful she was, and she would not eat anything, or even sleep.

‘Two nights after Seraphita died, and was lying as white and beautiful as an angel, with wax candles at her head and feet and with a white flower in her hand, her mother went quietly into the room, and sent the old nurse, who was watching over Seraphita, away. Then she closed the door and threw herself on her knees, and prayed so hard that her prayers could not get up to Heaven, for they were more like curses than prayers,--and, Señora Maria Madalena, it is not good to pray like that;

one must not send up prayers that are not fit to go to Heaven, for then Saint Peter shuts the gates of Heaven, and the prayers go wandering up and down in the great spaces of air, where there is no one to answer them.

‘The Devil, who is everywhere but in Heaven, came to her and asked, with a very sweet voice--for he can use any voice he likes--“What is it that Seraphita’s mother is praying for?”

“I want my child back; I want her in my arms that are so empty, and my heart that aches so.”

‘And then the Devil told her--I do not know exactly how he told her, but he made her know that he could give Seraphita back to her, just as she had been, with her rosy cheeks, and her black eyes, and her pretty black hair which was going to be like her mother’s; he could do this, only he could not give her soul back--she must be always without a soul.

‘And Seraphita’s mother talked with the Devil, for her wits were gone and she did not know right from wrong; and she promised him anything if he would only give her baby back to her again, even without any soul. And the Devil very politely said he did not want anything to be given to him; he was glad to give the child back, so long as she did not ask for the soul.

‘And then, while the mother looked at Seraphita, the pink came into the baby’s cheeks and she smiled; and then, because her joy was so great, the mother cried out loud, and her voice could be heard way down in the street. Then everybody came running in to see what was the matter; and the father was so happy he carried Seraphita again to the church and they had another ceremony, and this time he paid even more gold, and there was a great _festa_ in Granada.

‘You see, nobody but the mother knew that only Seraphita’s body was there, that she hadn’t any soul and never could have one; only the mother knew, and she could not be happy.

‘She grew very thin, and her smooth satin hair turned white on top, just where the Devil had laid his hand; so she wore a veil, even in the house, and she hid her eyes as if she was afraid, and she prayed day and night. Nobody knew what she prayed, because she did not dare to tell even her husband.

‘Bye and bye she grew so afraid and sad, because Seraphita somehow didn’t seem to her any more like her own child; she was like a beautiful wax doll; but she was not wax, and she looked just like herself to everybody else; only to her mother she seemed strange, and she could not get the warm love back into her heart, even though she pressed Seraphita to her bosom night and day.

‘The little baby grew in spite of that, and she grew prettier and prettier all the time. Everybody loved her except her mother, and that was just what the Devil wanted.

‘The day Seraphita was one year old her mother could not bear it any longer, and she went to her priest and confessed to him all about it; and then very soon she died, because she had kept her secret so long it had just burned her heart out.

‘After that--no one knew how it happened--but pretty soon everybody began to whisper and look queerly at Seraphita when the nurse carried her into the street; and her father seemed troubled, and he talked with the priest and wanted to pay some more money to the Church; but they wouldn’t have any more ceremonies for Seraphita, and the priests tried to make the people stop talking; what they said was “_nonsense_.” But it was not nonsense, and so they went on talking among themselves; and they would take their own children out of the way when Seraphita was old enough to play about.

‘So she grew up all alone except for her father and her nurse and the priest who went to live in the house--which showed that the Church thought there was something in it, else why should a priest go and live in the house?

‘One day, when Seraphita was out walking, she came across some little boys who were stoning a black kitten to kill it--for everybody knows that black cats belong to the Devil. And Seraphita ran right in among the flying stones, and not one of them hit her, for the Devil held his hand between her and the stones, and she caught up the Devil’s kitten and hugged it tight, while the stones fell at her feet, and the boys cried out, “Devil’s brat! Devil’s cat!”’

‘Pepita,’ said I, ‘she seems to me to have been a very nice, soft-hearted little girl.’

‘Oh, no! Señora Maria Madalena, you see black cats belong to the Devil, and if she had had any soul she couldn’t have taken one in her arms.

‘She carried it home, and she used to feed it, and she had to hide it away, because, of course, nobody wanted to have a Devil’s cat around, and the cat would run and jump into Seraphita’s arms whenever she came near; but it would fly like mad, and its hair would all stand on end, when anyone else came around, which shows--does it not?--that something was wrong. And another thing showed that all was not right with Seraphita: the priest began to teach her, and she learned faster than any child should. There was an evil spirit that whispered the words into her ear, so that she did not have to study.

‘She had power over horses, too, and if she just put her lips to a horse’s ear he would turn and rub his nose on her face. You see, horses have no souls, and they knew that Seraphita hadn’t any.

‘And, besides that, she always looked very old and grave when anybody was near; but when she was alone in the fields or in the woods she would laugh out loud, and they could hear her talk with the birds, for she knew bird-language; and she would lean over the water and talk to herself, or to the fishes. Oh, it was true, she had no soul!’

‘Well, what became of her?’ I asked, as Pepita paused, to emphasize her statement.

‘She grew up so beautiful that strangers would stop in the street and look at her as she passed; but, of course, everybody soon found out all about her, and then they would not look at her--at least they would not look her in the eye, unless they had a charm on.’

‘Do you mean that she had the “evil eye”?’

‘Oh, yes! why, she could make anyone have bad luck just by looking at them, and she could make flowers grow and blossom, and be more colors than any other flowers. She knew she had the “evil eye,” for she never went anywhere, or visited the sick or the poor, though she had plenty of money. She used to send the priest with food or clothes. You see, she knew.’

‘And what became of poor little Seraphita?’

‘Why, you see, when she was about twenty years old she was very ill again, and she lay in a trance for three days. The doctors wouldn’t go near her, and her own old nurse had died, and they couldn’t get anyone to take care of her, till finally the priest sent to the convent for one of the Sisters. She was a very good woman, and she went to the house, and, creeping on her hands and knees, so that the Devil could not get hold of her, she went right into the room and prayed all night. Her prayers went straight up to Heaven; and she prayed that Seraphita might die, and that before she died her soul should be given back to her.

‘And, Señora Maria Madalena, just as the sky began to grow pink in the east, and the white mist blew across the vega, and the birds began to call, what do you think happened?’

‘A beautiful white dove flew into the window and alighted on Seraphita’s breast, and, laying its bill close to her mouth, it breathed a soul into her, and then the dove just vanished, and Seraphita was dead.

‘Then, because God had been good to him, and had given Seraphita a soul again, her father built an orphan asylum and called it after her, “The Seraphita”; and you can see it over there, with the sun shining on it--it looks like gold.’

‘It is a pretty story, Pepita; but do _you_ believe she had no soul?’

‘The Señora knows I am English on my father’s side, but my mother was Spanish.’

‘So you are half Spanish, and _half_ believe it; is that so, Pepita?’

‘Yes, Señora.’

Project Gutenberg's *The Little Room and Other Stories*, by Madelene Yale Wynne

SECOND VIOLIN

from the IA etext of *The Dove's Nest*, by Katherine Mansfield

A February morning, windy, cold, with chill-looking clouds hurrying over a pale sky and chill snowdrops for sale in the grey streets. People look small and shrunken as they flit by; they look scared as if they were trying to hide inside their coats from something big and brutal. The shop doors are closed, the awnings are furled, and the policemen at the crossings are lead policemen. Huge empty vans shake past with a hollow sound; and there is a smell of soot and wet stone staircases, a raw, grimy smell. . . .

Flinging her small scarf over her shoulder again, clasping her violin, Miss Bray darts along to orchestra practice. She is conscious of her cold hands, her cold nose and her colder feet. She can't feel her toes at all. Her feet are just little slabs of cold, all of a piece, like the feet of china dolls. Winter is a terrible time for thin people—terrible ! Why should it hound them down, fasten on them, worry them so ? Why not, for a change, take a nip, take a snap at the fat ones who wouldn't notice ? But no ! It is sleek, warm, cat-like summer that makes the fat one's life a misery. Winter is all for bones. . . .

Threading her way, like a needle, in and out and along, went Miss Bray, and she thought of nothing but the cold. She had just come out of her kitchen, which was pleasantly snug in the morning, with her gas-fire going for her breakfast and the window closed. She had just drunk

three large cups of really boiling tea. Surely,
they ought to have warmed her. One always
read in books of people going on their way warmed and invigorated by even one cup. And she had had
three ! How she loved her tea
!

She was getting fonder and fonder of it. Stirring the cup, Miss Bray looked down. A little
fond smile parted her lips, and she breathed tenderly, "I love my tea."

But all the same, in spite of the books, it didn't keep her warm. Cold! Cold! And now as
she turned the corner she took such a gulp of
damp, cold air that her eyes filled. Yt-yi-yi, a
little dog yelped; he looked as though he'd been
hurt. She hadn't time to look round, but that
high, sharp yelping soothed her, was a comfort
even. She could have made just that sound her
self. And here was the Academy. Miss Bray
pressed with all her might against the stiff, sulky
door, squeezed through into the vestibule hung
with pallid notices and concert programmes, and
stumbled up the dusty stairs and along the pas-
sage to the dressing-room. Through the open
door there came such shrill loud laughter, such
high, indifferent voices that it sounded like a play
going on in there. It was hard to believe people
were not laughing and talking like that ... on purpose. "Excuse me—pardon—sorry," said Miss Bray,
nudging her way in and looking quickly round the dingy little room. Her two
friends had not yet come. The First Violins were there; a dreamy, broad
faced girl leaned against her 'cello; two Violas
sat on a bench, bent over a music book, and the Harp, a small grey little person, who only came
occasionally, leaned against a bench and looked
for her pocket in her underskirt. . . .

"I've a run of three twice, ducky," said Ma,
"a pair of queens make eight, and one for his nob
makes nine."

With an awful hollow groan Alexander, curling his little finger high, pegged nine for Ma. And "Wait
now, wait now," said she, and her
quick short little hands snatched at the other cards. "My crib, young man!" She spread
them out, leaned back, twitched her shawl, put her head on one side. "H'm, not so bad! A
flush of four and a pair!"

"Betrayed! Betrayed!" moaned Alexander,
bowing his dark head over the cribbage board, "and by a woo-man." He sighed deeply, shuffled the
cards and said to Ma, "Cut for me, my love !"

Although of course he was only having his joke
like all professional young gentlemen, something in the tone in which he said "my love !" gave Ma
quite a turn. Her lips trembled as she cut the
cards, she felt a sudden pang as she watched those
long slim fingers dealing. Ma and Alexander were playing cribbage in
the basement kitchen of number 9 Bolton Street.

It was late, it was on eleven, and Sunday night, too—shocking! They sat at the kitchen table that was
covered with a worn art serge cloth spotted with candle grease. On one corner of

it stood three glasses, three spoons, a saucer of sugar lumps and a bottle of gin. The stove was still alight, and the lid of the kettle had just begun to lift, cautiously, stealthily, as though there was someone inside who wanted to have a peep and pop back again. On the horse-hair sofa against the wall by the door, the owner of the third glass lay asleep, gently snoring. Perhaps because he had his back to them, perhaps because his feet poked out from the short overcoat covering him, he looked forlorn, pathetic, and the long fair hair covering his collar looked forlorn and pathetic, too.

"Well, well," said Ma, sighing as she put out two cards and arranged the others in a fan, "such is life. I little thought when I saw the last of you this morning that we'd be playing a game together tonight."

"The caprice of destiny," murmured Alexander. But, as a matter of fact, it was no joking matter. By some infernal mischance that morning he and Rinaldo had missed the train that all the company travelled by. That was bad enough. But being Sunday, there was no other train until midnight, and as they had a full rehearsal at 10 o'clock on Monday it meant going by that, or getting what the company called the beetroot. But God ! what a day it had been. They had left the luggage at the station and come back to Ma's, back to Alexander's frowsy bedroom with the bed unmade and water standing about. Rinaldo had spent the whole day sitting on the side of the bed swinging his leg, dropping ash on the floor and saying, "I wonder what made us lose that train. Strange we should have lost it. I bet the others are wondering what made us lose it, too." And Alexander had stayed by the window gazing into the small garden that was so black with grime even the old lean cat who came and scraped seemed revolted by it, too. It was only after Ma had seen the last of her Sunday visitors. . . .

A COLORED CRAYON FOR CHARLIE

By Mary Ellen O'Neil

THOUGH in my sketch book of people I confine myself for the most part to black and white, yet I invariably use a colored crayon for Charlie. Because of his blond, blithe atmosphere. Because of his neckties and waistcoats. Because of his gaudy soul that was a moth and hovered for

ever about the festive candle. The trick is to chalk him in a few bright lines, to achieve, if possible, that effect of carelessness, art concealing art, that is the most laborious of tasks.

Several pages are required for his delineation, innumerable poses, one more elegant than the last, yet each true and essential. But it can hardly be gainsaid that Charlie is most Charlie when playing the role of guest and god to Mrs. Valentine Mallerby. Here his fifty years are in no wise traitorous; they speak only to his advantage. He would not look a day younger, he would not forego credit for one of those days that has gone to his mellowing. He would prefer that people should forget he was ever in any sense an under graduate, or a young man not stuffed with opinions, or a child bawling for nourishment. He is culture's product, polished whichever way you turn him, and so far removed from all things banal or vulgar, obvious or domestic, that he stands clear of most human associations. One meets him only on the plane of the most delightful social intercourse, during one's exquisite hours.

His lessening yellow hair is brushed and pommaded vigorously into opinionated points, his mustaches flare with airy nonchalance. About them and the jutting triangle of bearded chin is something acute and articulate: they speak as it were, when he is silent and say the most distinguished and arresting things. His utterances are farther for ward than his mouth. Likewise his eyebrows spurt with vitality and beneath them each eye is a critic. You hear his voice and you instinctively know what pronunciation it will give to such words as "extraordinary," "necessary," and "military."

His evening clothes indefinably suggest diplomatic circles. The black ribbon dangling down his shirt front

causes strangers, who have no idea how simply they have been acted upon, to revere him. The fable of his distinction is a universal one and faithfully believed by her without whom there could be no machine. She is rich and a great lady, one pales beneath her heavy obligations and stifling prestige. By the set of her wistful mouth, the anxiety of her eyes, even the blue veined delicacy of her hands one is reminded of a person out of a sick-bed. Yet she is never ill. She is undeniably the most successful hostess in a town noted for social successes. The curious thing about her is her evident reluctance for the role . . . like royalty taking a hand, a royal lady enfeebled by the stress of government. Few, however, suspect that she is in reality a rather stupid and very sweet-natured woman. Her cleverness is never more than an accident ; she uses silence to great effect—it passes as profundity. In some adroit way she has made Charlie her representative so that half the time his polished utterances are reported as her own.

Yet there has never been gossip, never the slightest little ripple. Because of Mrs. Mallerby's austere purity, her famous charities and the exciting dullness of her parties people positively clamor to attend and be bored. And there is to be found such a sifted assortment of gentry, to be heard such thin floatings of music or musical opinion! And always Charlie, the pseudo-host, bristlingly animated over refined, minute particles of opinion ; Charlie alarmingly contentious in his brilliant way, whipping the air in a conclusive gesture or taking a running leap into French or Italian ; Charlie seized with a gay epigram! His gymnastic voice rises at intervals with such phrases as, "Damrosch once said to me . . . ", "As Paderewski remarked when we last met in Poland ..." "My dear friend,

Eleanora Duse. ..." He speaks respectfully of his "voice" but wisely refrains from singing, of his compositions which go unheard. His book, "Porticoes of Paris," is hanging fire with a London publisher. He is always being urged to join such and such an archaeological expedition. His art education has been thorough, his musical education a thing to marvel over. He has read every noteworthy writer in the original, both classical and modern, has divined and acclaimed genius in embryo; he has always information to contravene current opinion.

His enchanted audiences accept him as a gentleman of easy means and assured elegance. Even his friend, Mrs. Valentine Mallerby, has stopped short of wondering what the source of his income may be nor dared to doubt that it is an adequate one. One cannot be poor and move carelessly among the terribly rich. . . . Yet that is exactly what our Charlie had had the temerity to do. Before becoming a Cosmopolite he was a New Englander and speaks now and then lightly of his "native heath" and "ancestral acres." He flashes the vignette of elm-shaded lawns, fireside chairs and anti macassars.

But journey to the town of his boyhood and inquire for a family of Fullertons and you will hear, "There was such a family but they've all died out. ..."

Poor Charlie cannot convince the townspeople to the contrary. He is the prophet, forlorn in his country. Save for the very tolerant, they take little account of him when he comes pompously back from Palestine or the Lord knows-where and litters the station platform with his outlandish luggage. And when he has crawled into his three obscure rooms in a "quaint" part of the town he is as good as swallowed.

There are, of course, highlights, moments. One is when on his daily con

stitutional to town, "the village" he calls it, he wears a short Alpine cape, high leather leggings and a violent plaid waistcoat and is nearly mobbed in the dry goods store.

"Now listen!" he comes out bristlingly at the giggling salesgirls leaning over the counter for a better view of him and the rude, staring shoppers. "You are displaying deplorable ignorance. This costume is both sensible and appropriate to the weather as you would know if you knew anything at all."

Yet he is only half incensed. One part of him enjoys the sensation he has created.

But later, on the way home, something of confidence oozes. He wonders, with a catch of pathos, if he is, after all, the incorrigible nincompoop they think him, if it would not be better for his soul's ease to submit to the narrow standards of his townspeople. But his ego flames up within him, instinctively rejecting, nursing its vanity, remembering the laurels it has elsewhere attained.

Abroad he is in his element. There poverty may be respectable, respected even; there are all kinds of fascinating and courtly people who suffer from the same embarrassment, or rather do not suffer but pool their chances with a gay camaraderie. The dingy pension gives upon a square where one has a meal of donkey meat and spaghetti, coarse bread and wine for a trifle over a lire, conversant the while with some fellow savant or enthusiast.

But here. Catch him in preparation for one of his famous visits to the house of Mrs. Mallerby. The small rooms are full of steam, Charlie in a bath robe busy with his wardrobe plus a flat iron. There is everything about him from oil sketches and shapes in Majolica to the remains of his breakfast, a mere cup of coffee and a roll in the Continental style. A step is heard on the outer stair and he rushes to the door, leaving the flat

iron where it will do the most good.
The milkman. The creature has
bounded up, thumped something on the
floor, and is scurrying down again when
Charlie's irritated but cultured voice
overtakes him.

"See here, my good fellow, not so
fast. I wish a word with you." He
pronounced it "w-a-r-d."

"Late already," jerks the voice from
the abyss.

"I'm sure that's no concern of mine.
I want to tell you not—now listen
closely, m'man, not to leave any milk
while I'm away. I shall certainly not
pay for it if you do."

"Oh, so you're goin' away, eh?"

Sound of a head being scratched.

"Wall, then what about settlin' for the
las' milk bill?" The feet come resolutely
up the stairs.

"The last milk bill, ahem." Bother the
fellow !

"I'll make that right with you when
I return."

"Return, eh? How do I know you
ever will return?"

"Well, really," rages Charlie in his
soul. For blighting insult this is a
killer. And the Fullertons helped
found the town, founded it, by Jove,
for such ungrateful bounders. He
holds his temper.

"I give you my ward," he promises
naively, and mops his damp brow.
He looks very odd to the milkman,
his ruffled, ungroomed head emerging
like that of some tropical bird from
the ruff-like collar of his bath robe
which happens to be a cast-off monk's
habit he has come by in his wander
ings. "I give you my ward as a gentle
man."

The fellow grins up at him doubt
ingly.

"How'd I know you air a gentleman ?
An' anyhow gentlemen don't weigh with
me. There's them that pays prompt
and easy, an'—an' there's the other

kind. No more."

"Bother, I'm in a tearing rush, and it's most inconvenient—most inconvenient."

He makes a hasty calculation. His calculations are ever to a hair's breadth. None but a born mathematician would dare venture on a journey so financially figured to a penny, almost to a fraction of a cent. Yet somehow he sails by. He gets where he wants to go and makes a proper appearance. Now then, he had intended presenting his hostess with a box of roses, the curly blond kind. But if he pays the milk bill—He casts about for a solution. Possibly he could still , afford carnations. No, bourgeois flowers, and expensive at that. . . . There's a thing called coreopsis—quite common. He rejects it with hauteur. He'll take her instead one of his treasured small etchings, those inimitable bits of Paris done by his friend Paul Carlet. A pity, but a gentleman must look to his obligations. He pays the milk bill. He rushes back to his ironing. The flat iron has been left too long and burned a ridge-like gash in the top of his only pair of afternoon trousers. Damn! But no matter. The portion damaged will come under his coat. He packs his bags. He gets them all aboard a trolley. He is flurried and a wee bit tired, out of character.

But at the railway station, after the kit-bags have been checked, a tremendous sense of well-being overtakes him. He looks and feels distinctive. His overcoat, mellowed by fifteen years of ocean travel and English fogs, maintains its pristine air of jauntiness ; he has a French novel under his arm. He drifts about before train time, smoking a cigarette in a beautiful onyx holder inlaid with diamonds, the gift of his old friend, Prince Popoloff. He has a flair for riding on trains and appearing interested and comfortable. Little by

little the disagreeable events of the day are dismissed from his mind, which furnishes itself pleasantly with anticipation of the next fortnight.

Like a salamander he eases and stretches himself in the divine sunlight which already casts its oblique ray upon him. He can afford now to laugh at his discomfort in his home town. . . .

The simple townspeople do not know what a reception he is accorded elsewhere ; they know only that he has committed the deadly sin—lived upon inherited money, a pittance at that. Well, what of it? And what if his tastes do lead him to seek an affluent society? Does he not pay his way in com of charm?

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And now it is evening, or to change the tense, came an evening of Charlie's arrival different from the many arrivals that preceded it. Was he getting old, or unsure of his established welcome in the house of Mrs. Mallerby that it seemed to him more than ordinarily beautiful and satisfactory, like one entering a palace of enchantment? Or had the jibes of the milkman gone deep ? He did not know. He knew only that the very face of the butler, old and benign, was in some way marvelous to behold, like a face from a freize of prophets.

Out-of-doors was bleak but Mrs.

Mallerby's house enfolded one in a scented warmth difficult to describe.

The carpet of the stair was thick—everywhere glimpses of ordered luxury cunningly contrived to appear simple—everywhere the gracious glow of hearth fires. He felt an enfeebled sort of gladness and humility which was the exact opposite of the spirit he usually brought to his visits. He thought how good she was to have him and give him always the same little suite of rooms, Tery neat and beguiling in their arrangement. He felt himself taken

back to, made a part of the traditional elegance which it was his curse to covet. His eyes smarted fiercely, but he dashed the tears away with the back of one happy hand and rummaging in the old accustomed box for cigarettes, he smoked one as a preliminary to dressing. He was conscientiously determined to make his hostess's dinner a success.

And a success it was, from the moment when Charlie greeted the dear woman in her drawing-room to the suddenly quiet interim when all the guests not staying in the house had gone home. The others were playing bridge in the far library. Charlie and Gertrude Mallerby stood in the dim-lighted lesser drawing-room, like ghost figures in the haze of remaining cigarette smoke which, eddying above a peacock rug, looked like mist over a lush valley. Strange the sudden, almost calamitous stillness that succeeds many voices. They have been there so long that the atmosphere still vibrates. And one's own voice which has mingled valiantly to the last, finds itself curiously lost for employment.

Yet the release from tension is great and unmistakable. The very brain seems to fling itself down among cushions in a child-like fatigue and abandon. Mrs. Mallerby looked at Charlie, who had exploded all his epigrams and was resting fallow. Charlie looked at Mrs. Mallerby whose weariness became her. Her lips barely moved, smiling round the words. "Let's sit. ..."

They did so, sinking with the frankness of old friends, down among the pillows of a small divan for two that complemented the fire. She was a woman who, whatever graces she might lack, knew the secret of repose, and Charlie, conscious that in the exertion of his talents he had been a bit hectic, was thankful for her mood. He was

glad not to talk but to give himself up to the pleasure of his surroundings, gradually to become more and more aware of her shapely head thrown back against a cushion, of the restful lines of her shoulders and arms that flowed in perfect symmetry.

He realized for the first time with something of a jolt that in her conservative manner of dressing she had obscured her youth. The very coiffure which she affected was prim and out of date. She looked and acted as a middle aged queen might look and act, abject to please her kingdom. Yet given a becoming light and a moment off-guard and she was feminine, soft and approachable.

Charlie's heart quickened and stood still like a frightened horse that has not decided whether it will jump or remain planted. He had never fallen in love. Even as a young man he had been so old in intellect and sophistication that he had seen it in damaging perspective—never nearer. He had always said that he considered it a charming idea. He had even written love sonnets that were marvels for form. But his inherent self-sufficiency had placed a barrier in the way of surrender. He wondered tempestuously, his eyes fastened on the porcelain lobes of her ears. At last it was as though his concentration drew a long sigh from her. "Thanks to you," she said, "it was a perfect evening—really perfect. Charlie, whatever should I do without you? I have come to depend upon you more and more."

There was a slight unevenness, almost a tremor in her voice. "You are really a great man—a very great force." In substance she had often said the same thing before and Charlie had accepted the monstrous sweetmeat, closed upon it, digested it as his due. But to night, his mortification fresh and tortuous, all alive to her sweetness and

womanliness, he could not bear to play the paragon. Here she was credulous to make a great man of him when he was in reality a—well, what was he, bluntly speaking? A dilettante and worse, a pompous parasite with hardly a shilling in his jeans, who went about patronizing people who were his superiors, honest people like Mrs. Maller by whose minds were too healthy to suspect him.

"Don't," he said suddenly and quite loudly, "I'm no force at all, I tell you, I'm just a musty old book of heterogeneous facts and impressions that no one would care a pin about if it wasn't—"

"What?" she urged amusedly.

"If it wasn't that I read aloud from myself so convincingly. You know the tune is sometimes more important than the words."

She laughed in spite of herself. But this was a new Charlie, shabby in his self-abnegation, and she was stabbed by an unwonted pity, fondness and daring. Her hand found his and closed over it tightly.

"Don't mind," she begged him almost in a whisper, "don't mind what you are, Charlie. We all feel that way at times, that we can't go on. What would you say if I told you I—even I have days of feeling that I practise a gross deception on my friends, that I'm living a life for which I don't qualify?" She turned upon him vehemently, "And I'm filled with a dull anger at myself for my lack of directness. The astonishing thing is that no one suspects me. And when I go about inspecting the hateful charities which my dead husband adored I want to turn and run. I am conscious of no benevolence on my part, only a tremendous futility and sadness. And then the loneliness of bearing a great name and dispensing a great fortune."

"But my dear Gertrude," protested Charlie, his forehead bedewed, "this is

a strange disclosure. Are you trying to tell me you aren't happy among your friends?"

She caught her lower lip in her teeth.

"Charlie, I am trying to tell you I am all alone."

All alone ... all alone . . . the words went scurrying through his brain, leaving their footprints every where. He stared at her piercingly and he saw the collapse of her dignity royal—he saw her gazing back at him like a very young girl. And he did not know what to say. Only the sweet virus of a new knowledge was bringing him a kind of youth.

"Mallerby?" he queried excitedly, almost harshly. "Were you in love with him?"

She shook her head.

"I was quite a child then. I had no soul of my own. And he kept me like a prisoner in a tower. Is that conducive to love?"

"Oh," he said, "pathetic, tragic in its way. ..." And his brain took up a long chain of half-forged links. "She's never been in love . . . I've never been in love. . . . Both of us missed out . . . diverted into other channels . . . such a life for a fine woman. ... If only I were a fine man . . . but I'm no more than driftwood. . . . She would see through me in time. ..."

"Well," her voice came again from afar. "I'll tell the whole truth till it hurts us both. I've been terribly grateful for your personality in my house but not always awfully interested in what you were saying—because, you see, I couldn't follow. Dear, dear Charlie, don't misunderstand. It's just that I'm not a particularly mental woman."

Her eyes begged forgiveness and he thought distractedly, "Mental woman? God bless her, who wants a mental woman? Cold pie!"

"There have been times," she dared very slowly with an adorable hesitancy, "when I've wished you were less clever. Charlie, and more human, when I've wished that we might be just two ordinary people not so very distinguished or sought after. Living-more-for-our-selves—"

God ! He closed his eyes. He thought riotously, and the beautiful pictures came in fascinating detail, sinful, tempting detail . . . her house, her fortune to the end his days . . . gone all compromises with poverty . . . suave brilliance . . . solid success . . . what he deserved . . . what he was most fitted for. . . .

He opened his eyes vacantly, still lost in the voluptuous parade.

Then he saw Gertrude Mallerby herself, soft with love and trust, and he would not let the pictures come back. . . .

III

Rome is often disagreeably cold in winter. I knew a man once who called on Charlie, he had letters to him from a mutual friend, and found him in a wretched room in a wing of an old palazzo, dressed in an altar cloth with a stocking tied round his throat. He was subject to quinzies. But Charlie, rising, it would seem, superbly above his embarrassment, invited his caller to take luncheon with him next morning. At that meeting, the fellow tells me, he appeared faultlessly attired, trousers creased, shoes shining, the ends of his mustaches pommaded—even a pansy in his buttonhole. There is a little cobbler in the Via della Scrofa who can take the tongues out of your shoes and with the leather can skilfully repair the toes of them. There is a little tailor in a by-street of Paris who can fashion a fresh lapel out of the under-side of your coat.

They sat al fresco in the Piazza di Venezia and ate maritozci and drank

cafe nero, and the fellow tells me that
the charm of the encounter was one
which lingers long in his memory. . . .
A colored crayon, for Charlie!

from the IA etext of The Smart Set, May 1923

SOME MEN ARE LIKE THAT,

by Lilian Lauferty

“WALTER loves Genevieve.”

The announcement was made in blue chalk letters, sprawling amorously against each other and the gray stone front wall of the Midvale Grammar School. At recess, Kitty Meredith, beckoning mysteriously, led Genevieve Lingard out to Union Street where Genevieve’s affairs basked in the light of publicity and the noonday sun.

“Lookie what some onc's wrote about you and Wally Blake,” she giggled.

““irriten,” murmured Genevieve, cocking her head at the blue scraw .

“Cept W'ally Blake and Lonnie Dawson and maybe Rudy Shultz on tiptoes. nobody’s tall enough to reach,” prompted Kitty. eyeing Genevieve’s own frustrate tiptoes and stretching hnger-tips. “And you dassent let Wally see. Or anybody. They’d tease you—”

“Come on!” Genevieve cried, maintaining her own counsel.

Then racing in advance of a breathless Kitty, she led the way in turn. She darted into the playground and straight toward the corner where such masculine activities as marbles, mumbly peg and Indian war-dances were in session.

“\Valter! Walter Blake,” called Genevieve. “Come here.”

“Walter—I want you,” jeered a voice. mimicking Genevieve in thin tremolo.

. Other voices took up the refrain. It became a chant weaving in and out of the boy’s corner. A phalanx of boys surged forward, laughing, mocking the little silly who imagined their leader would come when a girl called him. Walter was the biggest boy in

Grade S-A. He was as tall as lots of the high school fellers. He'd licked two Freshies a week ago when they tried to put him off the field where the second nine was out for practise. As if he'd go when a girl called! But he had gone. He was at Genevieve’s side. towering protectingly between her and the jeering school. His gray eyes were bright and the jutting of his sturdy jaw and the flare of his nostrils suggested something more than a temporary belligerency. His head was tossed high, though his cheeks carried burning

crimson banners. "Here I am, Genevieve," he announced valiantly. Here were all the other boys too, trailing along in diminuendo. Genevieve pranced and then looked demure as she continued to give Wally Blake the orders it was clear he'd obey with all the school watching and wondering. "Go out in front, Walter, and erase what's on the wall for my mamma and my sister Mabel and everyone to see," she suggested delicately. "Aw—I can't! Aw—leave it be. 'Tain't doin' any hurt." Thus Walter, the school applauding its leader's independence. No girl was going to make Wally Blake stand 'round. Lonnie Dawson produced a piece of red chalk and with many flourishes printed slyly on the wall behind Walter and Genevieve: "Walter loves Gennivive."

"Look what Lonnie's doing!" shrilled Kitty. out front too." "Wal~ter. make him stop," simpered Genevieve. ing fun of me—and it looks worse red than blue."

"He wrote it
 "He's mak
 "Lonnie, please go out front and do what she says," mumbled Walter, his eyes on the trench his copper-toed shoe was digging. "Won't!" vaunted Lonnie. "Don't haveta. Who's gonna make me?"

"Gwan," mouthed Walter gently. some time."

"Who's gonna make me?" repeated Lonnie, plucking heart of courage from Walter's pacifism. "Oh, Walter!" shrilled Genevieve, her curls bobbing about a puckering face. "I never thought you'd be a fraidy." Walter gulped. The muscles across his jaw tightened. He took a step before which Lonnie retreated two. Then he said politely:

"Lonnie, will you please do like Genevieve says?" Lonnie threw back his shoulders and cried mincingly, "You mind Genevieve yourself, Walter. I didn't write nothing to erase. You do it."

Walter didn't hit him. It was the school-bell which punctuated Lonnie's words. Recess was over. The children surged automatically toward the school-door. A jeer arose. "Walter's 'fraid of Lonnie. Wally dassent touch Lonnie. Wally's a 'fraidcat."

Out of the volume came Lonnie's taunt: "Wally's seairt of me. I can punch his face. He's 'fraid to He don't think enough of Genevieve to take a licking for "I'll do somethin' for you

"Oh, Walter," pleaded Genevieve, "If my mamma sees that out front, she'll think I'm such a silly! And Mabel'll tease s0——"

Walter turned and plunged toward the playground gate. When he came into the assembly room five minutes late and was summoned up front to the "mourners' bench" where evil— no I don't want it to get you. dearest."

doers must sit missing classes and staying in after school to make up their work, little giggles popped up all about and were stifled before teacher could trace them. It was a joke though how Walter was afraid to fight Lonnie when he'd licked those High School Freshies. Anyway Lonnie was leader now and Wally hadn't even fought for it. It was funny how you couldn't tell a boy was a cowardly-cat till something showed him up like that. But Genevieve, eyes modestly and cryptically 'veiled, sat studying a note which had fallen to her desk as Walter went marching by to the mourner's bench.

"I couldn't hit Lonnie for what was on the front wall," she read. "I'll lick him good tomorrow for other things. But not for Walter loves Genevieve. I rote that myself and its so."

When Walter was seventeen, he went East to Harvard. There he made friends, the team and the crew. Also an engagement with Genevieve to come to Cambridge for his Class Day. And one with himself to marry Genevieve as soon as he got out of law school and got one client. Genevieve knew about this, but she laughed and said Class Day was far enough off but law school and the client were A-a-ages away.

"Walter loves Genevieve," the boy would reply sturdily. "He always has. He can wait."

Walter's father died during his junior year. That left him with no one to love but Genevieve and his feeling became so poignant that he was sometimes afraid it might frighten her. But she went on laughing out of wide blue eyes that had a way of twinkling at the corners, and she tossed her yellow curls in mockery of anything big enough to frighten her.

"We could be married right after Class Day," suggested Walter. "I want you so much, dear. Walter loves Genevieve,

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He was holding himself in leash against his own fury when voices floated up to him mistily, scarcely intruding on his mind with any meaning. you know. There's enough money for a tiny home and you're so little that's the kind would be right for you. Lots of fellows in Law School are married. At least—some are."

"You're always so—precise about everything. what you say and plan and every teeniest thing," laughed Genevieve. "I like to wait and see what comes without being so—precise. I'm not ready to be married for A-a-ages yet. I don't like to plan things all out."

"But you will come to Commencement. I've counted on that, so it seems part of Harvard and part of my life."

"Oh, I'll come. If I didn't you wouldn't have any folks be longing to you. That would be dreadful," conceded Genevieve.

"I'll come to Class Day."

Kitty hieredith came with her, and they stayed With the

Boston L Merediths, kinsfolk of Kitty's. On the day when the crew rowed a winning race at New London, Genevieve Lingard stopped off at PI'OVldCI'I'CC on the way to see Walter stroke the eight, and became Mrs. Gerald Meredith. In three days Merry Jerry Meredith Won the reality Of which Walter had dreamed for years. _ _ _ _

The crew broke training that night at a bang-up dinner at the Somerset. But Walter wasn't there. He'd gone straight to the Merediths to tell Genevieve how much knowing that she was watching had helped him row a good race. But Kitty was waiting to tell him that Genevieve had not seen the race.

"She meant to go," Kitty explained. as if that would have set everything straight. "She meant to go right on from Providence to New London. And she planned to wait and tell. you to-night. But Jerry just would start for the White Mountains. And she can't resist anything he says to do. He Just sweeps her along, \\ Walter_ She can't help it."

"Does she love him so much?" asked Walter, his white lips merciless as they formed the words that burned them. "She's mad about him," gushed Kitty. "He's just swept her off he; feet. Merry ~lerry's fascinating—so dark and slim and dashing. But lots of girls like big, slow men, Walter. Oh, Walter. I think she was apig. And I'd dc anything to make it easier for you. Maybe it would help you get through the evening if you took me to the Pops. Do you feel like doing that, Walter?"

"I couldn't stand being with any girl." Walter gave back curtly. That was still true at the end of eighteen years.

Having made friends, the team and the crew. Walter also made good at Law School and kept his friends and the prestige of his athletics. His career later in the law was a credit to himself and a pride and joy to a big group of Harvard men. When an offer of magnificent proportions to act as special counsel for Oil Amalgamated, offices on lower Broadway, came along, the bunch at the club felt that this was precisely what you'd have expected of Walt.

The President of Oil Amalgamated was old Bruce Parmenter, a Harvard man of another decade. Young Bruce, a this year's 'grad,' had made the crew and the team

which Walter coached. No matter what the demands of the law and a growing practise, Walter had time for every year's teams and crews. Young Bruce adored him. Old Bruce admired his work. And even the fellows who'd forgotten the story of why Walt's hair was iron-gray before he was twenty-five got a lot of satisfaction out of the idea that a large sized piece of good fortune was coming along to crown his honest plugging.

The tradition that Walter wasn't a lady's man traveled to New York ahead of him. Still he was so well set up and so handsome in a stern iron-gray fashion that the crowd at the Harvard Club decided with royal good will he was much too fine to waste. He'd make some woman darn happy. And the right woman would know how to smooth the lines that ran harshly from his nose to the corners of his mouth.

So Walter found himself besieged with numerous invitations to week-ends and plenty of off hand insinuations to come along up to the house for dinner. There were generally sisters and nieces "at the house." Also daughters. So Walter developed a fondness for working evenings at the Law library.

By the beginning of the summer he was looking so fagged that old Bruce fairly ordered him off to Wilamette for a week end with young Bruce. Walter started to stammer, but, ceased when young Bruce assured him that there wasn't a sister or a cousin or an aunt in the oiling. And they motored out to Wilamette in young Bruce's maroon racer and had a round of golf at the club before dinner.

Walter made the strange links in two over bogey and Bruce insisted that they must stay for dinner and boast about it to the boys.

"We'll sit in the bachelor's corner over at the end of the dining room. There's jazz all through supper every night, but if any fresh female comes to our refectory table to invite you to dance. there's a balcony you can make in one stride and a terrace you can dash down to safety," laughed young Bruce.

Bruce had plenty of cause to be proud at dinner. For by the time they got to the roast, five men had insisted on seconding Walter when Bruce put him up for the club and on speaking to the membership committee about railroading him in ahead of the waiting list. Then, leaving Walter in the hands of friends, young Bruce made for an adjacent table and dragging out a girl with the abruptness he might have shown in plucking an apple from a low hung bough, he whirled out into the swaying mass of dancers.

“Turn your chair, old man, so you can watch the band. The club fool is at it again, mixing it up with the smokes and their jazz.”

Walter turned toward the raised platform where the grinning negroes sat playing with a barbaric joy akin to the rhythmic abandon out on the floor. A white man was playing the banjo. Flamboyantly white under his sleek dark hair, he was groomed to a formal immaculateness that stood out like a blot. On his thin lips there was a complacent and fixed smile. His wavering eyes demanded attention. He seemed puzzled because everyone went on dancing instead of paying tribute to his prowess with the banjo.

“Damn silly clown!” snorted Walter’s neighbor. won’t care to meet him.”

But Walter knew the man who had just been called a clown. It was Merry Jerry Meredith, the man who had taken Genevieve from him. Walter found himself growing cold. The years swept back, and his shame and fury and helplessness were raw and new - a am. gMerry Jerry dropped his banjo and swaggered to the front of the platform. He held up his hand. But his gesture did not arrest traffic. The dancing went on with a casual and accustomed indifference to his bag of tricks. . . . He tried a few buck and wing steps. They won him fleeting glances. Merry Jerry turned and whispered something in the ear of the negro pianist. The negro grinned, and shook his head. Then the white man settled things in the immemorial way. He slipped his hand into his pocket and cupped a bill into the palm of the pianist, who wavered no more but broke off the dance and slowed down to an’ insidious and writhing prelude.

Reluctantly the dancers left the floor. Merry Jerry had captured it. His fatuous smile broadening, he stepped to the front of the platform and began droning out the words of a cheaply daring song. It dripped innuendo. It challenged mufled and knowing laughter.

Walter felt himself choking with futile rage. His brain stammered protests. What had been decently tragic was suddenly a burlesque. Walter hated himself, resented the years he’d spent mourning a woman who had chosen to spend those years with a slaving little pup like Meredith. In all the years Walter had never hated Genevieve never blamed her. He had to despise her now.

Choked by the atmosphere of the room that had been so fragrant and friendly a few moments before, Walter flung to his feet and strode out to the balcony. He vaulted down to the black velvet of the grassy terrace. He bathed in the spaciousness of the evening. Outdoors was a decent, quiet place where one tree toad didn’t try to outdo all the others in raucousness. He was holding himself in leash against his own fury and nau

sea and the futility of the feelings he'd wasted on a woman who could put up with such a drunken clown, when voices floated up to him mistily, scarcely intruding on his mind with any actuality or meaning.

"You didn't have to rush me away like this. Momsie. It's worse than sticking things out to cut and run. Besides, why all this holienthan~thou stuff? I liked it "

" Let's put it that I'm tired and thought you'd be——too chivalrous to let me go home alone."

The second voice fluted. After all the years, her voice was unmistakable. It was Genevieve who spoke.

Walter stood shamelessly still and listened. He flattened his lips to hold back his breath. If he had needed any excuse, he would have told himself that he hated Genevieve so much that he had a right to anything now. The younger voice, the first he had heard, cut in flippantly.

"Call it manners to crab Merry Jerry's act by walking out on him?"

"He—doesn't know," cried Genevieve, picking her words slowly in contrast to the gay assurance of the girl's voice in response.

"Like fun he doesn't. He's not so tight he can't see. And he's fun. But if we act as if he had smallpox what do you think the bunch will think?"

:"Oh. Jinny—it's you that counts! I hate having you thfl'k identified with all the—cheapness that seems to have caught folks. I don't want it to get you, dearest. It's time you were in bed. And I'm tired. Your father won't—mind."

Genevieve's voice made a brave showing. It seemed to be fighting a great weariness. Walter remembered suddenly that Kitty Meredith had called Merry Jerry slim and dark and dash ing. That was eighteen years ago. He picked up the thread of conversation below on a sharp cry from Genevieve:

"You

"You bet he won't. He's a good fellow. He has all the fun that's coming. I want some of it too. What's the sense of missing the mix-up he's starting? The party was dead 'till Merry Jerry put some life into it. I'm going back——"

A tall, slim figure rushed by Walter and vaulted the balcony railing as easily as he had made it a minute or two before.

And Walter went down the terrace to Genevieve. He did not hate her any more. He pitied her too much for that.

She saw him coming toward her in the moonlight that silvered down like a giant search-light. And she started back from the path with a strange, cringing motion that merged her with a tall bush of rank, sweet syringa.

"Genevieve," cried Walter, "are you running away? "

She stepped out from the bush, her hands on her heart, her head

flung up to the alert.

“Walter!” she whispered.

back.”

“Yes, Genevieve, I’ve come back,” he said quietly.

Genevieve held out both her hands. He took them and they stood in a silence that seemed to be clamoring for words

Walter knew he could never speak. At last Genevieve said,

“It’s eighteen years! Have you been happy?”

“No, not till now.”

“And I thought you’d hate me!”

“I thought so too. But—Walter always loved Genevieve.”

He contrived a laugh—but Genevieve broke in on it.

“Oh, you shouldn’t say that. But I want you to—like me—after all. Oh, Walter, you always knew what was right. I’m all at sea now. Help me. Perhaps I’ve—hurt—your life. And still I’m asking you to help me. Isn’t that just like me?”

“What do you want me to do?” asked Walter quietly. “I will. You know that.”

There was a moment which lay between them like a tangible

“Walter Blake. You’ve come

’ thing. It seemed to hold everything that Walter’s life had lacked for eighteen years. It seemed to demand something in terms of the tawdry five minutes when Merry Jerry Meredith had driven him out of the club—to Genevieve. Walter tightened his hold on the fragile hands that lay in his. Perhaps he drew them closer. For a moment he had the illusion that something very precious lay within his grasp. Then Genevieve dragged her hands away and hid her face in them for a moment. When she took them down, her eyes were wide and darkly still, but her voice fluted clearly.

“Could you get Jinny out of that place? She’s so like me—as I was—that you’re sure to know her. But she’s tall and boyish. She’d be such a sweet little thing—so fearless and honest and fine—if it weren’t for—things I can’t help. I want her to come home with me.”

“I’ll bring her,” promised Walter. “If that’s what you want.”

“It’s what I want,” she answered as if he had asked a question. .

So Walter flung back again to the heavy-raftered, smoky room that seemed so garish after the coolness of the air lifting gently from the palpable silver sheen of water below the terrace where he’d left Genevieve.

Jinny was by no means elusive. He found her at once,—at the bachelor’s table he had so lately deserted. She was leaning toward young Bruce Parmenter and troling out the refrain of the song her father was giving—presumably as an encore. A cigarette trailed from the corner of her mouth.

Walter had a camera flash of youth, pink and dear-skinned, of boyish bobbed hair that was fine-spun gold like Genevieve’s, of

soft lips taking on a challenging looseness, of eyes narrowing to sapphire chasms. The child was making of herself a deliberate lure. And young Bruce was yielding with an insolent bravado that dared her to dance out to any precipice she chose if only she took him by the hand for her flitting. The boy's eyes were slipping smoothly over the girl's face. They had touched her palpitating throat with all the Warmth of a forbidden caress when Walter strode to the table.

"Come along, Jinny," he said so tersely that it fairly crashed into the throbbing silence between the two youngsters. "I'm taking you and your mother home in Bruce's roadster. I'm borrowing it without a by-your-leave, young fellow."

Bruce caught his eyes away from Jinny's white throat and folded his brows to scowl. But he smiled instead. It was a man-to-man, worldly-wise smile. It said he remembered the Harvard classic of Genevieve's elopement and the race she didn't see.

"They all fall for you, kid," he said aloud with casual impertinence. "Here's the world's best woman-hater stealing you from me. Take her, Walt, old top."

As Bruce marched away, with complete poise, Walter put his

She jerked to her feet and cried challengingly. "Who are you, anyway—to come spoiling things like this?"

hand on Jinny's shoulder. She jerked to her feet and, blue eyes almost on a level with his, cried challengingly:

"Who are you anyway—to come spoiling things like this?"

"I'm Walter Blake," said the man, ready to wince, knowing he must be a tradition to the Merediths.

Jinny's eyes widened. She was very much Genevieve's daughter as she said on a cello note deeper than Genevieve's fluting:

"You don't need introducing. Did you ask for this dance?"

If you did, I can forgive you for sending Bruce away—"

Then Merry Jerry twinkled from her eyes and voice as she concluded: "When I had him darn near vamped."

"I'm taking you to Genevieve," announced Walter, taking you borne."

"You win," replied Jinny, suddenly jerking her head away for a second to watch young Bruce Parmenter who had no glance for her in return. "I know when I'm beaten. And you're going to be the hit of the piece. Only when all the debts and

"We're the divorcees start trailing, remember you saw little Jinny first."

"Come on, child," laughed Walter. "You're adopted."

But when the red car arrived at Meredith Towers, it appeared that it was he who was adopted, for young Jinny's pouting acceptance of the fact that he couldn't come in to call on account

of having to call back for young Bruce was followed by an insistence that the two of them must come to dinner on Sunday. Strangely enough—or perhaps naturally enough, since Walter couldn't sort out his impressions and find how much of all this was inevitable—Genevieve was as insistent as her daughter.

And the Sunday dinner invitation, which was about the last thing Walter would have expected to receive or accept, became a pact, with Jinny clamorously reminding him as he turned the maroon racer back toward the club that Bruce I'armenter must come along if only to see her vamp his friend "Waldo."

And that was how Genevieve came back into Walter's life after
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eighteen years, and how he came to dine at Merry Jerry Meredith's table.

Every impression Walter got from that strange and unexpected party made him wince. Merry Jerry had a jovial and overaccented cordiality which took on a we-understand-each-other-old-man quality toward Walter and a let's-understand-each-other-young-fellow tone where Bruce was concerned. Walter felt that he was balancing on the brink of the moment when Merry Jerry would become garrulous about the part they had played in each other's lives. But even that might have been better than the coarse paternalism with which Jerry flung an all too willing Jinny at young Bruce.

And Genevieve. There was an agonized quietude about her. Walter had a sketchy impression that she was making a passionate effort to play fair in a game she didn't want to play at all. She seemed anxious to be out of the picture her husband and daughter splashed upon the canvas of the moment. Yet she was patiently eager that it should be painted vividly even while she winced at its garishness. It was as if she wanted to get every thing clear, so that she might carry out some plan of her own.

What this was Walter discovered the next day.

Genevieve telephoned his office to ask if he had an hour for her. Walter smiled grimly. Having dedicated eighteen years or more of his life to her, the hour was ready to strike. But he didn't say that. He merely suggested the Plaza for tea.

He arrived a minute or two ahead of the appointed hour. But Genevieve was waiting. Waiting for him. It seemed significant. Walter felt like a conqueror as he led Genevieve to the terrace and took his place across from her and let his eyes rest on her face under the pleasant shadow of a soft orchid hat. His eyes were possessive. He knew it. He felt they had every right to be. Every encouragement from circumstance and from Genevieve.

She smiled at him. Her eyes were troubled. Her throat pulsed jerkily and in spite of the soft five o'clock light and the orchid hat, she looked suddenly haggard and worn. She had orangeade and Walter drank White Rock. They sat in a silence that

throbbed. Walter felt there was no need of words between them. Suddenly Genevieve seemed to feel that there was.

"And we call it tea," she fluted in the well-remembered voice.

"That's like everything in the whole world today—shams and make-believe."

"Except love and friendship," Walter managed quietly.

"They stand."

"They stand!" Genevieve repeated gravely. "I'm taking advantage of the old friendship, Walter, as I always did, as I did Saturday night when I sent you for Jinny—to get her out. It's about Jinny I came today." ~

Her blue eyes fastened on him with a quality he found himself calling breathless. They seemed to be suspending everything but the business of looking down into his soul. Walter knew suddenly just what it was they mustn't find there.

"About Jinny," he said. "All right, Genevieve—go ahead."

"First about friendship," she managed with a wistfulness she seemed trying to make brisk and somehow final. "I did ours a terrible wrong once. I got—swept—into something different. I left Kitty to tell you and you to face the hurt alone. I don't deserve much—"

Walter gathered that the end of the sentence would not have indicated it was merely from him she deserved little. He was awkwardly conscious that she couldn't say she'd paid, but that she wanted him to know it. _

"It could never make me happy to think an old friend wasn't happy," he replied to the unspoken. Then because he feared smashing through a barrier of reserve Genevieve might still want to maintain, he added lamely: "If you're worrying about Jinny and I can help, I'll want to."

"She likes you."

"Yes, I felt that."

"And respects you. Oh, Walter, what has my daughter to respect? Not the country club life she understands so well. Not the thing called love she sees being batted about like a tennis ball. Not the thing she arouses in a boy like Bruce Parmenter, or gives him in return."

"She has you," said Walter reverently and meaning it with all his soul. It was his apology for what he had expected, had even thought he had a right to claim when Genevieve asked him for an hour. ‘

"What good am I for an ideal?" Genevieve swept herself and her reserves aside lavishly. "She knows about me. She'd excuse herself for being like me. Her heritage from me is to be headstrong and arrogant and selfish and thoughtless as I was."

"You were not!"

"And if that weren't enough to excuse her to herself for—anything, she knows how emotional I was. I let myself be swept into Jerry's life. I've never been right for him. I've never

known how to fill his life—perhaps I’ve never even wanted to—not from the first. So he had to fill it—with what he could find. I failed him, you see. Jinny sees. Do you think she has any reason to find a beautiful ideal in her mother?”

“Genevieve!” cried Walter. “You’re blaming yourself too much.”

It was inadequate. Genevieve smiled wistfully, but there was a grimness in the decision with which she went on:

“Perhaps if I were blaming myself enough, I couldn’t ask anything of you. But I can’t let Jinny pay for—my blundering. Walter, I have to say terrible things—indelicate, disloyal things. If it can help Jinny, I owe it to her. If it can’t—”

“Perhaps you owe it to me,” suggested Walter quietly. “Put it like that and don’t be afraid of the truth, Genevieve. Let an old friend face facts with you. You can’t say anything I didn’t—glimpse yesterday and Saturday night.”

“All right,” said Genevieve, laying her hands in front of her on the table and studying them intently. “You see what Jinny’s going to be if she’s not stopped. Like us. That means we can’t stop her. And Jerry doesn’t even want to. He doesn’t realize that Bruce Parmenter’s very glances—toy with her. He doesn’t dream how the club sneers at his daughter—and mine.”

Walter let that stand. It was the one service he could do Genevieve at the moment. She forged ahead, doggedly tightening her hands to steady herself.

“She’s lovely—to look at—and lovely deep down inside. She would respond to fine, big things if she saw them. You’re strong enough to impress her. She’d be proud of her conquest at first. Then you’d get your chance to mold her. If she were splendid enough, our world might respect her and forget her heritage. And I think it would respect her a little if a man like you sort of adopted her—took a ”

“Took a grandfatherly interest,” smiled Walter easily, taking up the words over which Genevieve’s lips fumbled vainly. ’

“This has been shameful of me!” cried Genevieve. “But I’m so desperate about her wildness and so frightened over that Parmenter boy and the high spirits that may wreck her. I was—restless too, and eager. She might get swept anywhere.”

“Oh, we can’t permit that,” protested Walter, trying to make it endurable for Genevieve, trying to let her say enough and not too much.

“Then you will help!” she cried, lighting up suddenly as if she’d stopped questioning. “Jinny’s the Genevieve I was. I’m asking you to mold her as you might have molded me.”

“She might have been my daughter,” Walter replied reverently. “I’ll adopt her and be proud of your faith.”

Within a week Walter took a house at Wilamette, discreetly distant from Meredith Towers, discreetly near Bruceedale.

Young Bruce Parmenter strutted in pride of the friendship so

openly expressed. Old Bruce sent half his servants to help get the place in order.

Then for two years, the Wilamette crowd marveled to see Walter Blake at the heck and call of that pert little sub-deb, Jinny Meredith. She preened herself on the friendship. Perhaps she even flaunted it in the face of Bruce Parmenter, who went on tolerating her and taking it for granted he could kiss her in dark corners.

But Jinny had less and less time for dark corners. She was out in the light reading the books Walter gave her and racing to art exhibits and concerts with him. She won the string of tiny oriental pearls he promised her if she'd graduate at the head of her class. And, passing over the lure of the movies, stenography, society, millinery designing and a course of dancing at Denishawn——each of which she had considered vividly if briefly as her chosen career——she announced at her graduation from Miss Hanson's that she was going in for interior decorating. And did, marching off with a new purpose in her buoyant stride.

Merry Jerry laughed at her nonsense. Wilamette disapproved. Moreover, it considered Jinny's career direct evidence that her father's was about done for. As if to prove it, Merry Jerry resigned from two clubs and three directorships within a few months. His exploits were public property.

Jinny's absorption in her work and her friendship with Walter became more and more intense.

Wilamette smiled, lifted its eyebrows and lowered its voice.

Merry Jerry Meredith's daughter would have a heritage of debts, had blood, and habits to match. Genevieve had managed cleverly by beginning to discount the future in the girl's childhood.

Not often do such eligibles as the right hand man of Old Bruce Parmenter come
And no

one who'd been managed a bit less perfectly than Genevieve had handled Walter Blake would ever have considered Meredith's girl.

Meredith's girl had to be reckoned with, She'd been going around the came into the club at the slack hour when everyone has finished tea and gone to dress for dinner. And there on the bulletin board was Gerald Meredith's name posted for non-payment of dues. Two years' roystering was calculated in red figures branding the name of Meredith. Jinny swept to the board and lifted her furious young hand to tear down the insult. Young Bruce Parmenter slouched out of the writing-room just then. He was on

the House Committee. Jinny ripped the degrading notice from the board and held it out to him.

“You could have stopped this. But you let them post it for everyone to see. Suppose I hadn’t come—”

“I’ll fix it, Jinny,” murmured Bruce pityingly

She blazed out at that.

“I don’t need you. You’re only doing this because you’re ashamed. You could have stopped it. There’s nothing for you to do now.”

Bruce tried for the paper. Jinny laughed. It sounded scornful, when it was only hurt.

“I’ll take it to Waldo,” she cried in a voice that was just this side of a sob.

“Oh, Walter!” stormed the boy, utterly primitive at the touch of the cool wrist he managed to seize.

He dragged Jinny close, flung his arms about her and set demanding lips on hers. And she, fighting for the reverence Walter had taught her to want, struck him a straight clean box on the ear just as old Bruce Parmenter came out of the writing room where his son had left him and for gotten him a few moments before.

Jinny whirled out of the club. Merry Jerry’s dues were paid in full the next day and his resignation accompanied the check. But Jinny didn’t wear her string of tiny Oriental pearls again.

Within the week young Bruce Parmenter went down to the Argentine for Oil Amalgamated. Old Bruce said it was a good thing. Young Bruce was listless about it. And Walter guessed some of the turmoil from the boy’s studied failure to find time for a farewell lunch with him.

Jinny had filled the nooks and crannies of Walter’s life so completely for two years, that Genevieve came to take her place in the dim background. He became suddenly aware in the weeks following Jerry’s resignation from the club, that Genevieve had changed her relation to her household. She was no longer a mere part of it like the crisp curtains and as un

obtrusive as they. He got the impression that, having taken Jinny from Merry Jerry, she was offering him herself instead. Meredith Towers and all it contained became suddenly Jerry's. Blatantly, almost terribly the place catered to him and built itself as a wall around him, a wall between him and the world from which he had been thrust out for non payment of dues. Genevieve seemed trying to make it up to Jerry for all the things he had cherished lightly and lost. If there

were things Genevieve could still lose, she seemed to forget them all.

But Jerry found a way to remind her of them.

In June, at the hour dedicated to the snail on the thorn and the dew-pearled sweetness of the clean young day, a milk man, returning from his suburban round, discovered a mangled car twisted into the debris of a bridge he had crossed two hours before. Down on the rocky ledges of the tiny stream below lay a dead man. It was Jerry Meredith. The little bridge he took along in his drunken dip of death, splintered into eternity with no more havoc than Jerry had made of himself and his car. There was a girl, too. She lay flung miraculously on a grassy slope high above the rocks. She was preserved for the life which she was persuaded to pursue somewhere else.

Walter attended to that. He attended also to the settling of the estate which could not by any stretching be made to cover the living expenses of Genevieve and her daughter. But Jinny had her profession. Her trade as she called it. She had packed two years' knowledge furiously into one year's time.

Walter gave her a commission at once. His house needed doing over. Dull old bachelor diggings had sufficed all along. He felt the sudden need of sunshine. Naturally Walter and Jinny did not discuss the young woman who had played her part in Merry Jerry's ungraceful exit

from Wilamette and life. Jinny was now so little of Wilamette's social life that she seemed to escape the sinister curiosity which masked itself under innumerable condolence calls on Genevieve. Besides, Jinny was always away from Meredith Towers—either over at Walter's measuring and planning and talking over ways of letting in the sunshine, or up in the city looking at wickers and chintzes and silver birches that suggested it.

Walter saw a great deal of Jinny and nothing of Genevieve. This was natural. He accepted it. And then of a Sunday morning Genevieve came to call on Walter. "Young Bruce Parmenter is back," she announced with seeming inconsequence. "He's coming to dinner. I left Jinny making the dessert and salad.' I leave things to her all the time now "

"The responsibility's good for her." said Walter heartily, pulling down a French blind so the light of his sun-room would not glare into Genevieve's face.

So he did not see her eyes brighten as she said,

"That's how I feel. You built well, Walter. She's fine—and stable. I'm letting her take care of me and try to keep up the Towers. It's the finishing touch—all I can do. She may despise me a little—for the ineffectual I am. Still it makes her strong to meet my need."

"She's a wonderful girl. You're right to make sure of her good points—to clinch them."

"You were wonderful about her—from the beginning. Now you've given her this sweet old place to decorate. And I'm going to live off that. But there's one thing, Walter—"

Genevieve stammered, holding out a certified check which represented the price of all her jewels—every bauble—every trinket—every gem.

"I hope it's enough to cover what you paid that—girl. You understand no one but—Jerry's wife has a right to—take care

of that girl. You see that?"

"Yes, I see that."

"Then you won't make me talk about it. That's one thing I can't thank you for. It's one thing I don't want Jinny indebted to you for."

"You're a wonderful mother, Genevieve."

"I ought to be a wonderful—some thing."

She left after that, protesting that she wanted to walk down the back road and return by trolley as she'd come. Walter let her go. He felt awkward and ineffectual. Her poise demanded nothing of him but acquiescence. That was all he could give.

He went over to the club for some golf, but found himself badly off his game. He wondered why Jinny hadn't asked him over to dinner. Genevieve wouldn't, of course. But with young Bruce there, Jinny might have been expected to. Walter gave it up and had another round of golf after dinner. He played better but wasn't in top form. He decided that he was fool enough to be misled because young Bruce hadn't raced over to see him the minute he returned.

Conscious that he wasn't thinking straight, Walter became aware of the amazing truth that he didn't even want to think straight. He preferred not to face facts.

Late in the afternoon, young Bruce came tearing into the club and dragged Walter off with him. He was bursting with some discovery he must share with old Walt. He whirled Walter to Brucedale and flung himself amazingly into the middle of things:

"When I heard about Merry Jerry, I came straight back. Does that surprise you? Of course I knew you'd take care of things—but I had to come. Can you guess why?"

Walter found himself facing facts sturdily and with a suddenness that showed how near he'd been to the truth all along.

"You found you wanted to stand by Jinny," he said quietly.

“Great guns! That’s it, old Walt. How did you know? I was a miserable snob all along. I didn’t want to like Merry Jerry’s daughter. She knew! Even when she was a kid, she knew that I’d fight it to the last ditch.”

“You didn’t tell her that to-day?”

“Sure I did. I had to get things straight between us. I had to take my chance with her knowing just what a rotter I’d been. Don’t you see that, you old brick—who always stood by?”

“It might have spoiled your chances, Bruce.”

“Well—at least, we start from scratch,” said Bruce slowly, with a stern stress on each word. “I may have to hurt you, Walter. But I won’t refuse to have her see me as the miserable thing I am. If you hadn’t molded her—so lovingly, I’d never have seen her.”

“And she always—liked you, didn’t she?” asked Walter curtly.

“She says so.”

That should have told everything. But it was muttered in a tone of dejection which implied there was more to be said.

“What’s the obstacle?”

“Mrs. Meredith. She says she has other plans. She’s firm. And Jinny refuses to go against her. It’s a mess.”

Walter smiled warmly. He seemed to crystallize suddenly back into his usual firmness and strength.

“It’s not a mess,” he said. “All you have to do is to drive me over to the Towers—and get Jinny out of the way.”

“This— isn’t hurting you too much, is it, Walt?”

“Not—too much,” he replied grimly.

“It’s merely waking me up.”

Genevieve had the first word. She flung it at him curtly like a challenge.

“You shouldn’t let her go.”

This, amazingly, was precisely what he had expected.

“But if she loves Bruce?” Walter demanded. “Youth must be served. We both know that.”

“Yes. There’s that. But I’m trying to think of you this time. I never have before. Not even when I gave Jinny to you—virtually for you to build up into the wonderful woman you’ve made. And I knew all about Pygmalion when I did it.”

Walter smiled. But his voice was stern as he asked:

“You thought of her. Wasn’t that right? She’s your daughter. You were trying to make her fine then. Don’t you want her happy now?”

“I do—desperately. But I want you happy too! She would have loved you if that boy hadn’t made his magnificent gesture—rushing back from another continent—confessing how hard he’s fought against it all. Don’t you see the drama of it? He couldn’t accept Merry Jerry’s daughter when there was still some illusion—about things. When we stand stripped for everyone to jeer at he comes to her. It’s magnificent. How can she resist?”

“You’ve expressed it perfectly, Genevieve. How can she resist?”

“It isn’t right. Walter. I’ve done this to you. I’m hurting you—again.”

She whispered the last word, acknowledging all that lay revealed between them now because she had ripped open the grass grown grave. Walter stared at her, his eyes went slowly over her face, and new understanding of her tenderness came to him.

“Why isn’t it right, Genevieve? You didn’t love me when I wanted you to. Jinny doesn’t when you want her to. And

“And you, Walter?”

“I’m glad.” He cried with clear certainty. “It would be terrible if I’d messed things up so she—loved me the wrong way—any way but the right way.”

“The right way? Walter—this pleases you. You aren’t hurt again? I can let my child be happy without—hurting you?”

Walter got to his feet and stood smiling down on Genevieve, listening to the last note of the voice that fluted once more

and then hid behind a mist of tears.

“Genevieve, don’t you know the right way for Jinny to love me?”

“How can she love you—loving Bruce as she says she always has?”

Genevieve rose to face him and her face was so wistful, so tender and gentle that he caught her in his arms without asking for the right or explaining what was so clear to him now.

“Walter—what does this mean?” she cried.

“It means,” he laughed triumphantly, “that Jinny loves me as she should—like a daughter. Don’t you know, dear—Walter loves Genevieve! He always has. He has a right to again. Walter loves Genevieve!”

It rang out so that she put her fingers against his lips. And he kissed them, knowing that was why she had put them there.

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